Joint Meeting on IKB

Joint Meeting of the Bern Convention Network of Special Focal Points (SFPs) on Eradication of Illegal Killing, Trapping and Trade in Wild Birds and the CMS Intergovernmental Task Force on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean (MIKT)

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TOWARDS A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE DRIVERS AND MOTIVATIONS BEHIND ILLEGAL KILLING, TAKING AND TRADE OF BIRDS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

FULL REPORT

(Prepared for the CMS Secretariat by BirdLife International)

Summary:
This report synthesizes existing knowledge on the social, economic, cultural, environmental, and institutional factors driving IKB across 18 Mediterranean countries, to offer more guidance for targeted national and regional policy responses.

The European Union was recognized as Champion Plus for their generous support and commitment towards addressing Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean for the period 2015 - 2028.

Towards a Better Understanding of the Drivers and Motivations behind Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Birds in the Mediterranean Region -Full Report

Final Report

July 2026



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Abstract

IKB remains one of the most pressing conservation threats across the Mediterranean region, with an estimated 11–36 million birds illegally killed each year. Despite continuous international policy attention, progress in reducing IKB has been inconsistent, in part because the underlying human drivers and motivations of this behaviour are not well understood across the region. This report synthesises existing knowledge on the social, economic, cultural, environmental, and institutional factors driving IKB across 18 Mediterranean countries, to offer more guidance for targeted national and regional policy responses. Information was collected via a standardised questionnaire completed by CMS MIKT National Focal Points. Drawing on the COM-B behavioural framework (Capability, Opportunity, Motivation–Behaviour), the study analysed motivations, drivers and enabling conditions across four perpetrator types: shooters, trappers/takers, and poison users, at local, national, and international scales.

Findings show that IKB is a highly context-specific phenomenon shaped by distinct actor profiles and motivations. Recreational and experiential motivations primarily drive shooters, while trappers and takers are motivated by hobbyist interests and commercial profit. Poison use is almost exclusively linked to predator and pest control. Financial gain is the strongest overall motivation, with subsistence playing a negligible role. IKB is overwhelmingly male-dominated, and skills are predominantly acquired through family and social networks. Weak enforcement, cultural tolerance, and easy access to tools are the most widely endorsed enabling conditions. Across all use categories, direct acquisition from perpetrators dominates and demand is primarily domestically embedded. However, 44% of respondents identified international market demand as a main driver of IKB, a near-even split that cautions against characterising IKB as predominantly a local phenomenon. Falconry stands out as the category most clearly linked to cross-border trade, suggesting a supply network that extends beyond local informal transactions. Hobbyist use is more broadly applied, including cage bird keeping and bird singing, and also drives demand that extends across borders, particularly among trappers and takers.

The report concludes that effective responses to IKB require context-specific, multi-pronged approaches that combine stronger enforcement with social, cultural, and community-based interventions. Primary recommendations include tailoring behaviour change strategies to specific motivational profiles, integrating IKB education in schools, restricting access to tools, and fostering multi-stakeholder national action plans. Further research is needed to address knowledge gaps, notably regarding direct accounts from perpetrators, gender dynamics, and international trade routes.

List of Abbreviations

- **BC:** Bern Convention
- **CMS:** Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
- **COM-B:** Capability, Opportunity and Motivations – Behaviour
- **EU:** European Union
- **IKB:** Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Birds
- **MIKT:** Intergovernmental Task Force on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean
- **NAP:** National Action Plan
- **NGO:** Non-Governmental Organisation
- **RSP:** Rome Strategic Plan
- **SES:** Socio-Economic Status
- **UNODC:** United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

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Introduction

Illegal killing, taking, and trade of birds (IKB) remains one of the most significant threats to migratory birds across the Mediterranean region. An estimated 11–36 million birds are illegally killed each year in the Mediterranean (Brochet et al. 2016). Despite sustained policy attention and international commitments, progress in reducing IKB has been inconsistent, in part because the underlying human drivers and motivations of the behaviour are not well understood.

In 2014, the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) adopted Resolution 11.16 (Rev. COP15) *The Prevention of Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds*, which mandated the creation of the Intergovernmental Task Force on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean (MIKT). MIKT brings together governments and key stakeholders to coordinate action against IKB across the region and works to promote a zero-tolerance approach to illegal taking of migratory birds. In 2019, countries across Europe, North Africa and the Middle East committed to reducing IKB by at least 50% by 2030 as part of the *Rome Strategic Plan (RSP) 2020-2030: Eradicating Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade in Wild Birds in Europe and the Mediterranean region* - the strategic framework of the CMS MIKT and the Bern Convention's Special Focal Points on IKB.

Supporting the implementation of the Rome Strategic Plan Objective 1.2, the present study assessed the social, economic, cultural, environmental and institutional factors influencing IKB at both the individual and societal level across 18 countries in the Mediterranean region. Contributing to actions 1.2a to 1.2d, this assessment provides a regional-level overview of the key motivations, drivers and enabling conditions of IKB. Information was collected via a questionnaire answered by CMS MIKT National Focal Points. Using the COM-B (Capability, Opportunity and Motivations – Behaviour) theoretical framework, the questionnaire examined the problem of IKB in two connected parts: first the supply, or offer, then the demand to identify where interventions can most effectively disrupt illegal practices (Michie et al., 2011).

In line with the terminology adopted by the CMS, in this review, IKB refers to the "activities which are illegal under national or regional law/regulations and involve the deliberate pursuit, killing, injuring or catching alive of wild birds or are aimed at illegal marketing live or dead specimens of wild birds, including their parts and derivatives. Such activities include but are not limited to: killing/trapping in closed periods, in areas with prohibitions in force, by unauthorised persons and/or protected species; use of prohibited means and substances; breach of bag limits; possession, donation, use, movement, transfer, offer for sale, advertisement, consumption, import, introduction from the sea, transit or export, of specimens." (CMS, 2020).

This study represents an important first step in exploring and addressing knowledge gaps on the drivers, enabling conditions and motivations of IKB across the Mediterranean region. However, the findings reflect the perceptions and knowledge of the National Focal Point respondents rather than the results of empirical research and should be interpreted accordingly. Further country-specific analysis will be required to inform the design of targeted, evidence-based interventions and to support their integration into National Action Plans.

Theoretical Framework

Among the many theoretical frameworks available to explore human behaviour, the COM-B model (Capability, Opportunity, Motivation – Behaviour) was adopted as the theoretical framework to guide this study because it disaggregates behaviour into three practical and distinct components to facilitate its exploration: capability, motivation, and opportunity (Michie et all, 2011). These components (capability, motivations and opportunities) are not independent, on the contrary they influence and interact with each other, and together, they account for both the internal factors that draw individuals towards IKB and the systemic and environmental conditions that enable the behaviour to persist to across contexts.

The first component, capability, refers to the psychological and physical capacities required to engage in IKB, encompassing knowledge of wildlife protection laws, the ability to identify protected species, and the technical skills necessary to carry out the practice. The second component, motivation, captures the internal, conscious and unconscious, processes that drive individuals to act. This includes intentions, beliefs, values, personal identity conceptions, desires, among others. Motivation can be automatic, rooted in habits and emotional impulses, or reflective, grounded in conscious reasoning and deliberation (Michie et all, 2014). This study focuses on reflective motivations, as it considers IKB to be predominantly a deliberate, calculated behaviour, driven by conscious decision-making processes such as weighing perceived risk of detection, pursuing cultural or recreational goals, or acting on held beliefs about the cultural legitimacy of the practice.

The third component, opportunity, concerns the external physical and social conditions that make a behaviour possible or more likely. Consistent with this study's focus, opportunity captures the external forces that are independent of the individual yet still shape the behaviour, either by enabling it or by incentivising it (St John et al., 2013; Ribeiro et al., 2019; Wallen & Daut, 2018; Tolbert et al., 2023). Drawing on this literature, this study operationalises opportunity into two dimensions: (1) enabling conditions, factors that allow the practice to happen or continue, such as weak law enforcement, cultural normalisation, and easy access to the tools involved; and (2) drivers, factors that offer incentives, such as economic gain, peer pressure, and social prestige.

A further reason for adopting this framework is that it functions not only as an analytical lens but also as a practical tool for designing interventions. The COM-B model holds that modifying any one of its three components, capability, motivation or opportunity, can prompt behaviour change, thereby supporting targeted strategies for addressing complex, multifaceted behaviours such as IKB. Its structured approach makes it particularly well suited to examining the factors underlying IKB at both the individual and societal levels, and to generating recommendations that address them at each level, including those aimed at structural actors such as governments. In this study, the COM-B model, therefore, serves a dual purpose: a diagnostic tool, to identify the most likely motivations, drivers and enabling conditions of IKB at national and regional level; and, as a planning tool, to inform a set of targeted interventions and policy recommendations to address this behaviour.

Goals

- To synthesise existing knowledge on the drivers and motivations underlying IKB across the Mediterranean region, identifying knowledge gaps and shared patterns that can inform national and regional policy responses.
- To generate evidence-based recommendations for MIKT Members and adjacent countries, supporting the design of targeted national and regional strategies to address IKB.

Methodology

Data for this study were collected via a structured questionnaire administered to CMS MIKT National Focal Points. The survey remained open for responses between September 2025 and January 2026, and the full questionnaire, including all questions and response options, is provided in Annex 1.

The questionnaire was structured around the COM-B (Capability, Opportunity, Motivation–Behaviour) theoretical framework, examining IKB across two connected dimensions: first, supply, or offer; and second, demand. Drawing on this framework, the study analysed mainly motivations, drivers, and enabling conditions across four perpetrator types, shooters, trappers, takers, and poison users, at local, national, and international scales.

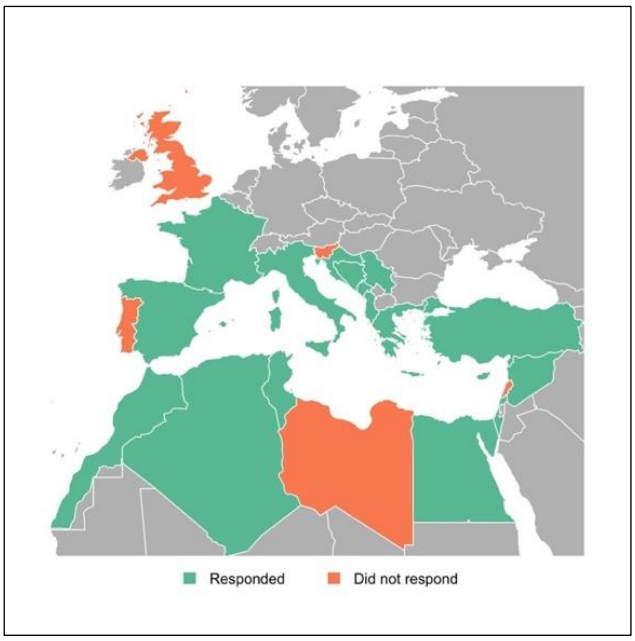
The findings reflect the perceptions and knowledge of National Focal Point respondents rather than empirical research or direct data collection from perpetrators and should be interpreted accordingly. Further country-specific analysis will be required to confirm and refine these findings at the national level.

Survey Engagement and Participant Overview

Level of Engagement

- 18 countries responded to the survey: Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Malta, Montenegro, Morocco, Serbia, Syrian Arab Republic, Spain, Tunisia and Türkiye.
- 6 countries did not complete the survey: Lebanon, Libya, Monaco, Slovenia, United Kingdom and Portugal.

Figure 1: Survey Engagement per Country



Respondent Background and Years of Experience

- The survey shows a near-even split between male (56%) and female (44%) respondents across the 18 participating countries.
- 50% have been MIKT Focal Points for five years or more, and 22% have served for more than eight years.

Key Findings

Section 1: IKB Supply

Who is behind IKB?

Socio-economic profiles of perpetrators were categorised based on their method of operation and geographic scope:

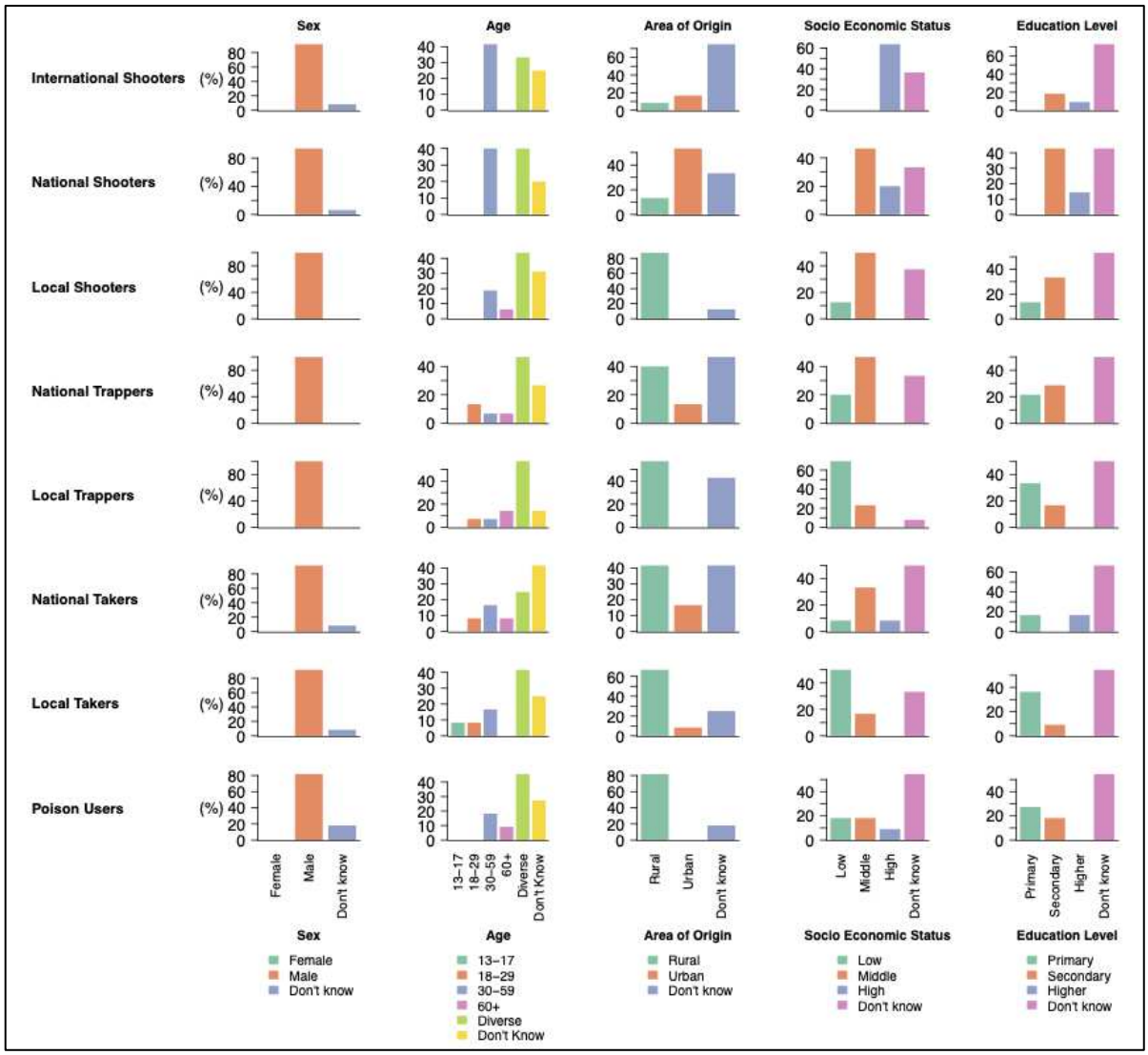
Method:

- Shooters: Individuals who illegally kill or injure birds using firearms or other weapons
- Trappers: Individuals who use traps, nets, snares, or other non-selective equipment
- Takers: Individuals who illegally collect birds or eggs using methods other than shooting or trapping
- Poison Users: Individuals who apply banned substances or legally permitted substances in illegal or inappropriate ways, resulting in bird mortality

Geographic Scope:

- Local: Operate within their immediate district or region
- National: Operate across multiple regions within their country
- International: Travel from other countries

Figure 2. Socioeconomic Profiles of Perpetrators



Findings by Actor Type by Country

Shooters:

International:

- Consistently recorded as high socioeconomic status (SES), and the few education records available indicate higher level education (Tunisia). They are predominantly male and aged 30 to 59.
- Area of origin is frequently unknown.

- Education and area data are missing for most countries, making this one of the less well documented actor types despite its policy relevance.

National:

- Consistently recorded as men, more likely to be urban.
- SES tends towards middle, though higher SES is recorded in some European countries. Education is predominantly recorded as secondary.
- Age reported to be 30 to 59 or diverse.

Local:

- Consistently recorded as male, predominantly from rural areas and low to middle SES. Secondary level is the most common.
- Age is most frequently recorded as 30 to 59 years or as spanning diverse age groups.

In Montenegro, qualitative data indicate that shooters are predominantly part of the middle class, with a significant participation of the population from rural areas and of those associated with agriculture or the public sector.

Trappers:

National

- Consistently recorded as male from a middle socioeconomic standing, and secondary level education.
- Area of origin is more mixed, with some urban presence. Malta provides a well-documented profile for this type. Morocco, Tunisia, and Montenegro have significant demographic gaps.

Local

- This group is described as male and rural across all countries where data exists.
- Low socioeconomic status and primary level education are the dominant profile.
- Age varies; diverse age groups are most common.

Takers

National:

- SES ranges from low to middle to high (Serbia), and education spans primary (Greece, Spain) to higher level (Croatia, Serbia).
- Age is most commonly 30 to 59 or diverse. Very little demographic information from Morocco, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Albania provide.

Local

- Predominantly male and rural, with low SES and primary education where recorded.

- Greece again shows a younger age profile (18 to 29), while Croatia, Serbia, and Spain record the 30 to 59 range.
- Cyprus suggests that trappers and illegal takers generally belong to low to medium socioeconomic groups, though no quantitative or systematic survey data are available to statistically confirm this profile.
- The Syrian Arab Republic records an unusually young age range (13 to 17 years) for this actor type.

Qualitative data complement the profiles for trappers and takers. In Greece individuals involved in illegal trapping and taking are most often reported to come from minority Romani communities. While in Egypt, they are described as farmers and fishermen operating along the Mediterranean coast.

Poison Users

- Least consistently documented actor type and showed the greatest uncertainty regarding sex.
- Rural males of low to middle SES with primary or secondary education, including in Croatia, Serbia, Greece, Spain, and Israel.
- The Syrian Arab Republic was a quantitative outlier, with Poison Users more frequently associated with high SES. Further collection of qualitative data confirmed that in this country the high costs of the materials make them too costly for low SES individuals.

1.1. What are the motivations behind IKB?

Motivation, as the component of behaviour related to internal factors influencing behaviour, encompasses diverse emotions and thoughts. This study operationalises motivation into two dimensions: intentions and goals, and beliefs and values. By "intentions" we mean the tangible or experiential benefits actors derive from IKB: income, food, enjoyment, or risk reduction. Beliefs and values, meanwhile, shape how individuals rationalise the behaviour in relation to tradition, social norms, legality, or necessity. Although these dimensions are closely linked, they are distinct but complementary, and both are required to understand why IKB persists: a person can hold the same intentions while their actions are driven by a different set of values, requiring different interventions. For example, both may need food, but one may be driven by the need for cheap protein, while the other by the desire to share a meal with family or friends.

In the graphic below, we present the main motivations selected by country, ranked in high (1), medium (2) and low (3). The description of the categories used in question 7.1 (section 7) of the survey are described in Annex 2.

Figure 3. Motivations by actor type



Note: Ranked importance of motivation for actor type: 1 high, 2 Medium, 3 low.

Motivations differ depending on actors, methods and the national context

Motivations are rarely singular across the different actor types; economic, experiential, cultural, and social drivers frequently overlap, shaping heterogeneous profiles characterised for each actor.

- Across all countries surveyed, shooters, whether operating at local, national, or international level, show a consistently experiential motivation profile. For shooters, social recognition and cultural traditions frequently appear along these motivations, particularly at local and national levels.
- Trappers and takers display a markedly different profile. Involvement is most strongly associated with financial gains. For these actors, experiential motivations and social motivations seem to play a secondary role, and for local Trappers, culture is a strong motivation, the more acute across all actors. Local trappers show the most varied profile.
- Unlike all other actor types, poison users are primarily motivated by risk mitigation, particularly predator control. This pattern is consistent across countries. Poisoning is typically framed as a defensive or preventive measure rather than an act of profit-seeking or recreation, with birds often killed unintentionally as non-target victims rather than as the primary target.

Figure 4. Country-level motivations



Note: Countries were organised alphabetically and by region.

A multi-actor, multi-motivation challenge

The analysis of motivations by country shows that financial gain emerges as the strongest motivation overall, followed closely by experiential motivations and cultural practices. This reinforces the finding that IKB is driven primarily by economic opportunity, rather than subsistence. Notably, no country ranks subsistence as a dominant motivation, and it appears only in a limited number of contexts where it co-exists with other economic and cultural drivers.

Cultural motivations are rarely identified as the single most important motivation, but they consistently rank highly across multiple countries and actor types. Similarly, social motivations appear to reinforce participation by embedding IKB in community relationships and shared norms rather than serving as a primary incentive.

Motivations overlap rather than operate independently.

Across countries, motivations frequently cluster. Financial incentives often coexist with cultural practices (e.g. Italy, Croatia, Egypt), while experiential motivations among shooters are reinforced by social recognition and bonding (e.g. Bosnia, France, Italy, Spain). Risk-based motivations are narrow and highly concentrated in poison users and specific shooting contexts. Practical motivations linked to food appear in a small number of countries but are consistently ranked lower than financial or experiential drivers.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that IKB persists not because of a single dominant motivation, but through a combination of distinct clusters of motives that are more prevalent among certain actor types and levels yet vary according to each country's context. This underscores the need for differentiated country-sensitive policy responses that account for the specific motivational profiles of key actors.

Primary and Secondary Motivations per Actor Type

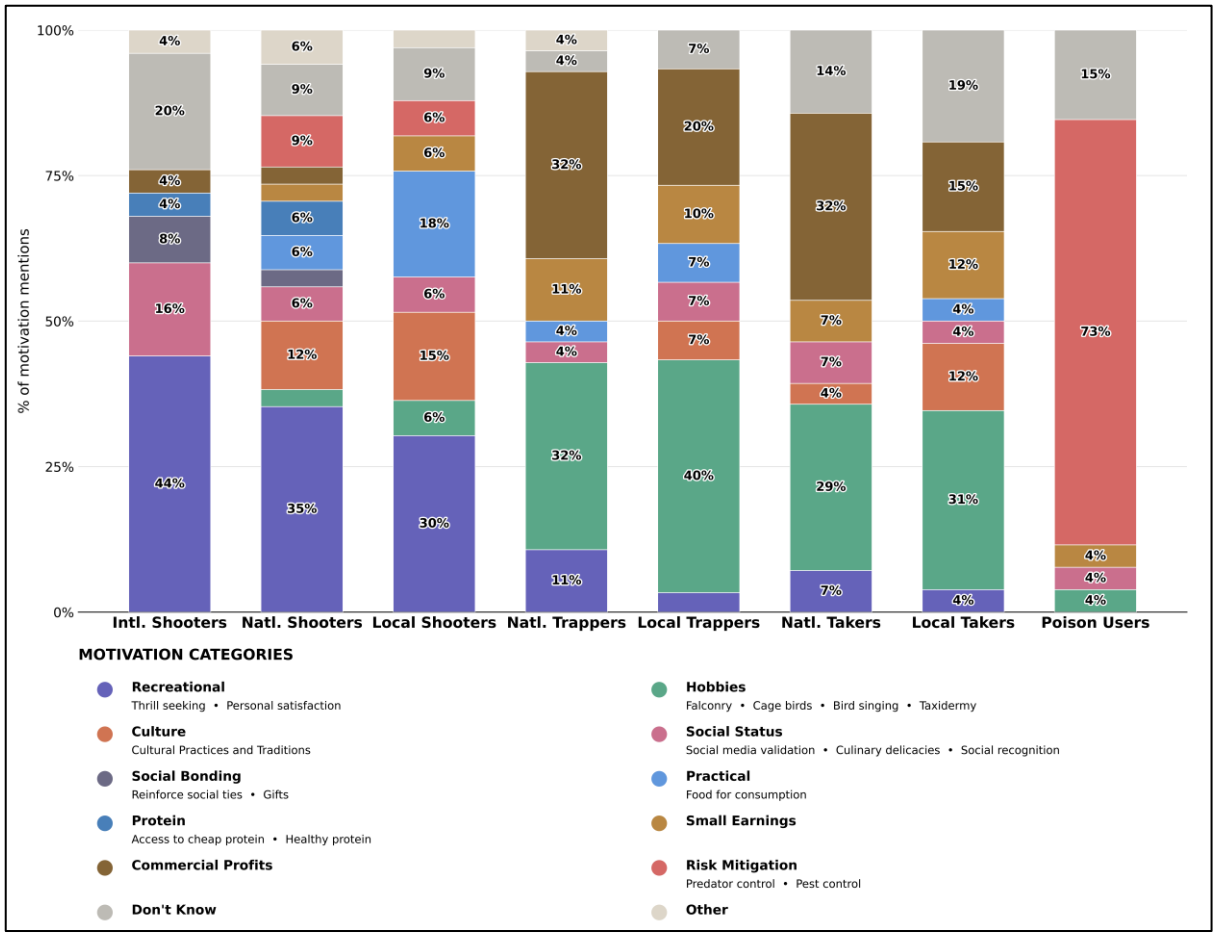
Building on the previous analysis of ranked motivations, this section examines motivations across actor types and countries. Rather than relying solely on overall rankings, question 7.2 (section 7) broke down the broader motivation categories used earlier into 23 options (which are described in Annex 3). Participants were then asked to identify the motivations for each actor group within their national context.

The stacked bar chart shows the percentage distribution of motivations for each actor type, combining first and second-ranked responses with equal weight. Each response was grouped into one of 12 categories, and the share of each category within each actor type was calculated as a percentage of total mentions. By weighing first and second motivations equally, the analysis highlights the motivations most frequently identified among respondents' top two choices, rather than emphasising differences in ranking order.

Experiential motivations encompass a broad range of drivers rooted in personal experience and enjoyment, including sport, leisure, personal satisfaction, and thrill-seeking. Given the breadth of this category, it was disaggregated into two distinct sub-types to capture better the different behavioural profiles it contains:

- Recreational motivations refer to cases where the act of illegal killing is itself the primary reward, driven by the thrill, excitement, or personal satisfaction derived from the activity. The focus is on the experience of the act rather than its outcome, and, in most cases, the bird is killed.
- While Hobbyist motivations, by contrast, are oriented towards the acquisition of birds, in many cases alive, for specific practices such as falconry, cage bird keeping, and bird singing competitions, and dead for taxonomy. Here, the motivation lies not in taking the bird but in its subsequent use.

Figure 5: Primary and Secondary Motivations per Actor Type (all countries)



Note: Percentages smaller than 3% are not labelled in the graphic.

Shooters:

International shooters are overwhelmingly driven by recreational motivations, reflecting that these actors primarily engage in IKB for thrill-seeking and personal enjoyment. Social status and unknown motivations appear as secondary drivers, suggesting some degree of social distinction alongside a notable data gap that warrants further investigation.

National shooters show a more varied motivational profile. While recreational motivations remain dominant, cultural practices and risk mitigation play a visible role, indicating that these actors are also influenced by tradition and perceived wildlife conflicts. Local shooters similarly lead with recreational motivations but stand out for their relatively high food and cultural motivations, suggesting that practical and traditional drivers are more relevant for local actors than for their national or international counterparts.

These same patterns are reflected in qualitative evidence from the region. In Spain, illegal shooters are reported to be predominantly hunters operating during legal hunting seasons, particularly targeting protected species in wetland areas, such as protected ducks, and medium-sized raptors, including goshawks, sparrowhawks, peregrines, eagles and kites. In Egypt, the consumption of certain bird

species has been identified as a driver among international shooters, as some species are caught and eaten, destined for the Gulf region.

Trappers

National trappers present a striking dual motivational profile, with hobbies and commercial profit emerging as equally dominant drivers. This suggests that in certain contexts, trapping serves simultaneously as a pastime, particularly in relation to falconry and bird keeping, and as a source of income. Local trappers are the most strongly hobby-driven actor type overall, though commercial profit and small earnings remain present, indicating that while hobbyist motivations dominate, economic returns continue to play a relevant role at the local level. Qualitative evidence from Egypt further highlights that local trapping is increasingly becoming a normalised activity, a sign of cultural entrenchment that not only makes the practice more socially acceptable, but also harder to reverse.

Takers

National takers mirror trappers in their motivational structure, with hobbies and commercial profit as the two primary drivers, reinforcing the pattern that the taking of birds is closely tied to both hobbyist demand and trade at the national scale. Local takers show a similar profile, with hobbies and commercial profit leading, though a notable proportion of unknown motivations suggests. This suggests some gaps in knowledge at the local level that warrant further investigation. Qualitative data from Spain illustrate how hobbyist motivations can manifest in practice: illegal trappers and takers reportedly act primarily for leisure, motivated by an appreciation for the song and plumage of finch species, reflecting an aesthetic and cultural attachment to certain birds that underlies the demand for their capture.

Poison Users

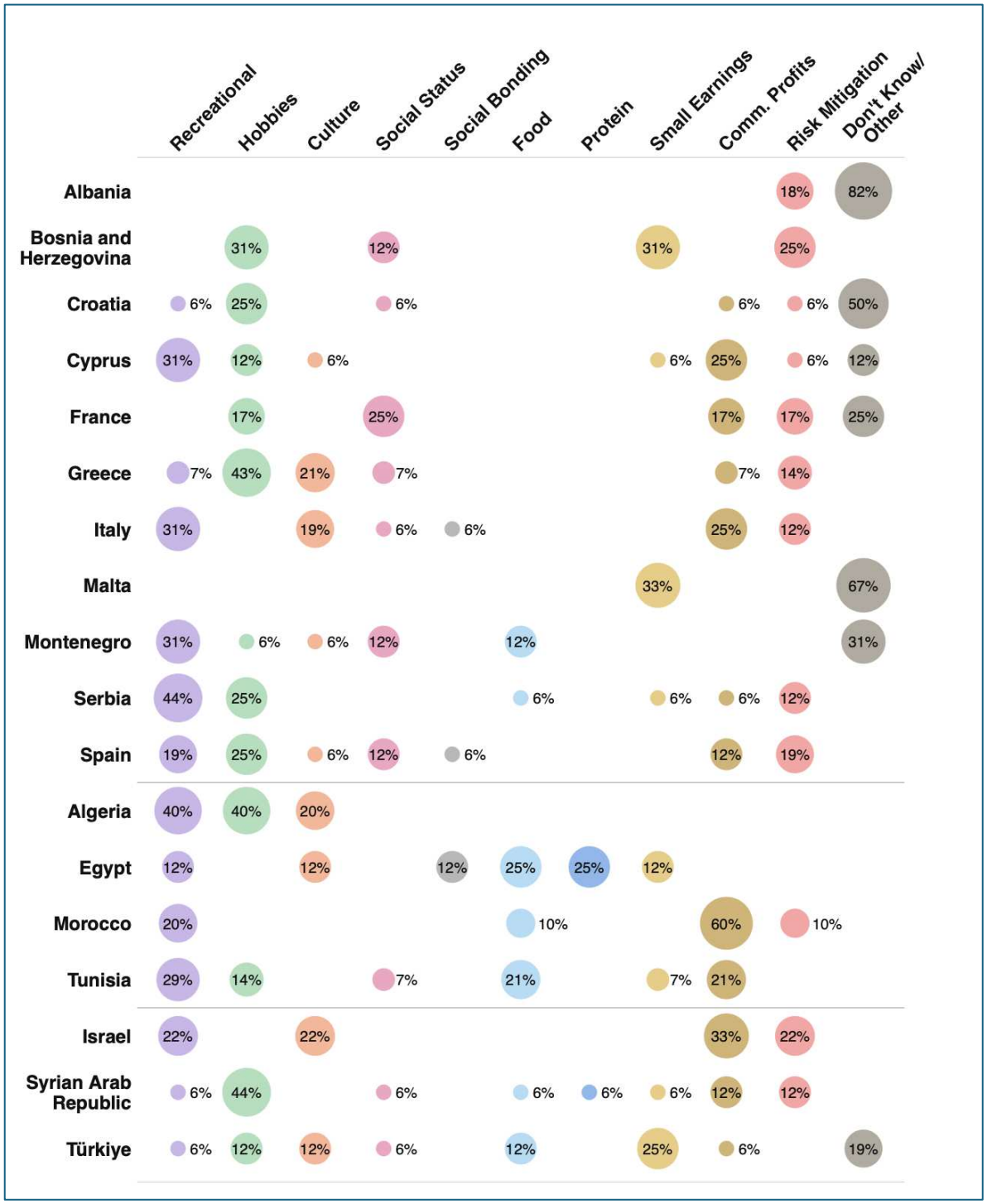
Risk Mitigation accounts for the most mentions, making this the most common single-motivation actor type in the dataset by far. This suggests that poison is overwhelmingly used as a tool for predator and pest control. However, the fact that risk mitigation is the biggest motivation type is probably related to a need to protect their livelihood/income from predators, not necessarily that birds are consider a threat. Qualitative evidence from Israel and Spain suggests that illegal poisoning is predominantly associated with farmers and hunting-estate managers in the latter, while in Cyprus poison users are often described as hunters attempting to exclude others from areas they perceive as their hunting territory. Similarly, in Italy, qualitative data mention that poison use is linked to the presence of predators such as wolves, feral dogs, cats, and foxes, but is also reported in the context of truffle harvesting and hunting competitions, where dogs may be poisoned to eliminate competitors' animals.

Primary and Secondary Motivations per Country

The chart below shows the distribution of motivations by country, combining first- and second-ranked responses with equal weight and regardless of IKB perpetrator type. As with the previous question, participants selected from 23 options (see Annex 3, question 7.2), which were then grouped into 12 broader categories. Weighting both ranks equally highlights the motivations most consistently identified across respondents' top two choices, rather than prioritising ranking order. Bubble size represents the

share of responses in which each motivation category was selected as a top choice. A legend is included below the chart as, in some cases, each category encompasses more than one specific motivation.

Figure 6: Primary and Secondary Motivations per Country regardless of IKB perpetrator type



Note: Countries are organised alphabetically within three regional groups, separated by horizontal lines. Following further consultation, Malta added that national shooters are primarily motivated by thrill-seeking, followed by personal satisfaction, and national trappers are primarily motivated by personal satisfaction, followed by small earnings.

Europe

Europe displays the most diverse motivational profiles across actor types and countries. Recreational motivations, encompassing thrill-seeking and personal satisfaction, are the primary drivers in Serbia, Montenegro, Cyprus, and Italy, suggesting that in these countries IKB is largely rooted in personal enjoyment rather than economic necessity or cultural tradition. Greece and Bosnia and Herzegovina stand out for the prominence of hobbyist motivations, particularly falconry, cage bird keeping, and bird singing, reflecting a strong cultural attachment to certain species that sustains demand for their live capture.

Commercial profit emerges as an important motivation in Cyprus and Italy, indicating the coexistence of financial and recreational incentives. This pattern likely reflects the different motivational profiles of the actor types operating in these countries. While shooters tend to be experience-driven, trappers and takers are more often motivated by financial gain, and both may be active in the same national context.

In further consultation, Malta added that the primary motivation for national shooters is thrill seeking, followed by personal satisfaction. National trappers, by contrast, are primarily motivated by personal satisfaction, with small earnings as a secondary motivation.

Qualitative evidence from Croatia adds important nuance to the cultural dimension of IKB in the region. In the Neretva Delta, illegal shooting was linked to a deeply rooted local tradition of informal male gatherings, during which the host is expected to serve at least one game dish, typically coot. This practice illustrates how IKB can be embedded in social customs and hospitality norms, making it particularly difficult to address through regulatory measures alone and highlighting the importance of culturally sensitive approaches to behaviour change.

North Africa

North Africa appears to be predominantly influenced by economic motivations, though with notable variation across countries. In Morocco, financial gains are the main motivation for IKB. Algeria shows a contrasting profile, with motivations divided equally between recreational and hobby-driven drivers, suggesting a more culturally and leisure-oriented context. Tunisia shows a mixed profile combining recreational, commercial, and food motivations, reflecting a more complex interplay that may require multi-pronged interventions.

Egypt stands apart as the only country in the region where practical motivations, particularly food consumption and access to affordable protein, appear to play a major role in IKB. Furthermore, qualitative evidence indicates that local trapping is increasingly becoming a normalised activity in this country.

Middle East

Middle East countries show distinct patterns. IKB in Israel is notably driven by Commercial Profits, alongside Recreational and Cultural motivations. Türkiye shows Small Earnings as its leading motivation, and the Syrian Arab Republic is dominated by Hobbies. However, for the latter country, further consultations indicated that the motivations currently stem mainly from the commercial benefit

that can be gained from this action, whereas in the years before the 15 years of instability in the country, the taking was mainly for hobby and recreational purposes, as well as a source of food

Across the three sub-regions explored, Social Status and Social Bonding motivations are consistently low, suggesting that peer influence and social relationships play a minor role compared to economic and experiential drivers. This finding suggests that social interaction serves more as a validating or identity-reinforcing function than a primary motivation. Risk Mitigation (pest and predator control) appears as a secondary motivation in several European countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, and Greece, indicating that perceived conflicts with wildlife management are also present and may result from indirect poisoning rather than from birds being the principal target.

What are the beliefs and attitudes behind IKB?

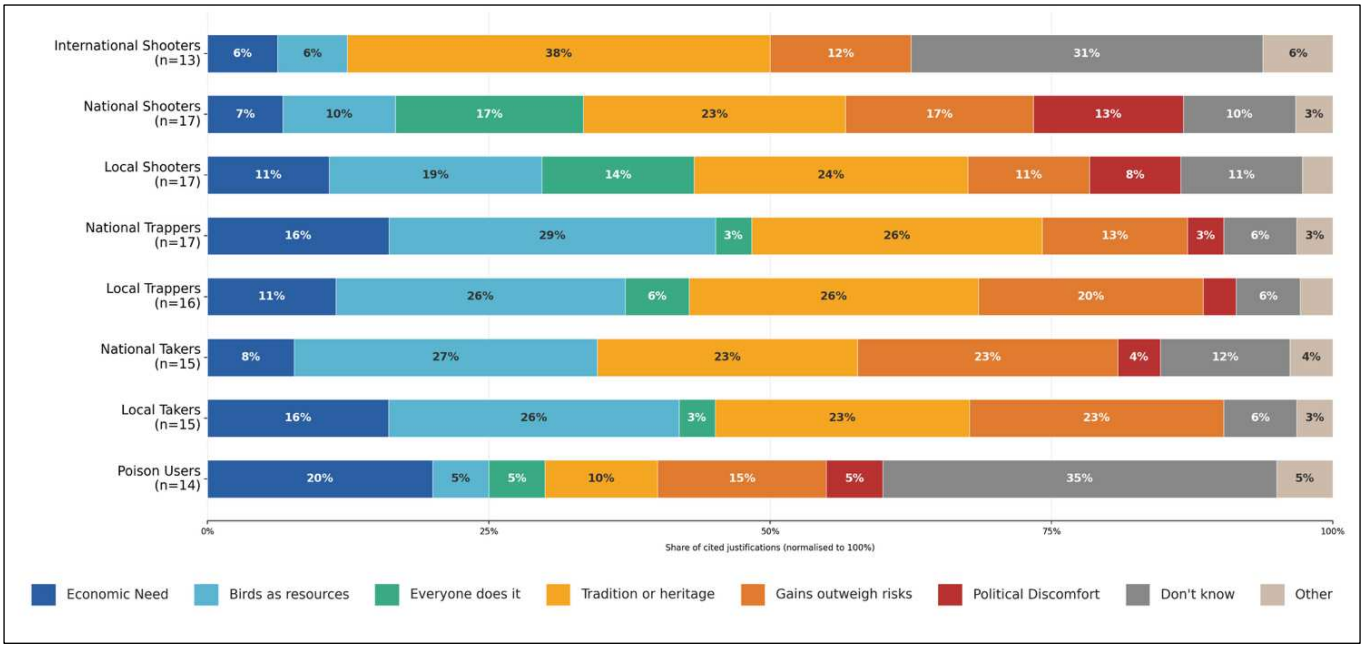
In this section, we address the question *"How do I justify this behaviour?"* While the preceding section examined intentions and goals, this section focuses on a complementary dimension: the beliefs and values that make the behaviour feel acceptable, legitimate, or justified. Individuals may share similar motivations yet justify their behaviour in very different ways: for example, as economic necessity, tradition, or resistance to authority, each of which implies a different policy response (Michie et al., 2014). Justifications also shape how people interpret and resist messages. Differences in justification may imply that different policy responses are necessary (Michie et al., 2011; 2014; Rare and The Behavioural Insights Team, 2019).

Respondents were asked to select from eight justification categories, with multiple responses permitted:

- necessary for livelihood or survival;
- everyone does it;
- tradition or heritage;
- gains outweigh risks;
- act of protest against the government;
- birds are perceived as a resource;
- don’t know;
- and other.

The figure below presents respondents’ selections across eight categories to describe how actors justify and explain their involvement in IKB. Multiple responses were permitted. It is important to note that these beliefs and attitudes reflect the perceptions of the survey’s respondents, and not necessarily the views of actors directly involved in IKB.

Figure 7. How Perpetrators Justify Their Involvement in IKB



The data indicates that IKB is the result of a mix of traditions, utilitarian views concerning wildlife, and in the case of some groups of actors, economic necessity.

- The reason most often given by almost all types of actors is tradition or heritage. Among international shooters, tradition is cited most frequently (38%), then by national trappers and local trappers (both 26%), followed by local shooters (24%), and national shooters and local takers (both 23%); in all these cases tradition is presented as a main justification, indicating that in many situations IKB is viewed as being closely linked to social identity and group norms and is not perceived as wrong. When tradition is the main factor, awareness-raising or legal deterrence on their own is probably not going to be effective and so interventions have to deal directly with community identity and cultural practice (Rare and The Behavioural Insights Team, 2019).
- Commodification: the view of birds as a resource is among the strongest justifications overall, particularly among trappers and takers. Because this framing does not require actors to neutralise a sense of wrongdoing, it is especially challenging to design initiatives to change this behaviour (Rare and The Behavioural Insights Team, 2019). The fact that it ranks closely alongside tradition across multiple actor types underscores how entrenched the utilitarian view of birds is across the region.
- The reason most often given by those who use poison is economic necessity (20%), followed by local purchasers (16%) and national trappers (16%), indicating that people operating at the local and national levels are mainly motivated by financial considerations. In contrast, international shooters cite economic necessity as their least common reason (6%), which is in line with their mainly recreational and lifestyle-oriented profile.
- Social norms ("everyone does it") are concentrated within shooting communities, cited in relation to national shooters (17%) and local shooters (14%), but rarely for trappers or takers. This highlights the role of peer influence and perceived collective behaviour in sustaining

shooting practices and suggests that social norm messaging, making non-participation visible and normal, may be a more effective lever for shooters than for other actor types (Rare and The Behavioural Insights Team, 2019).

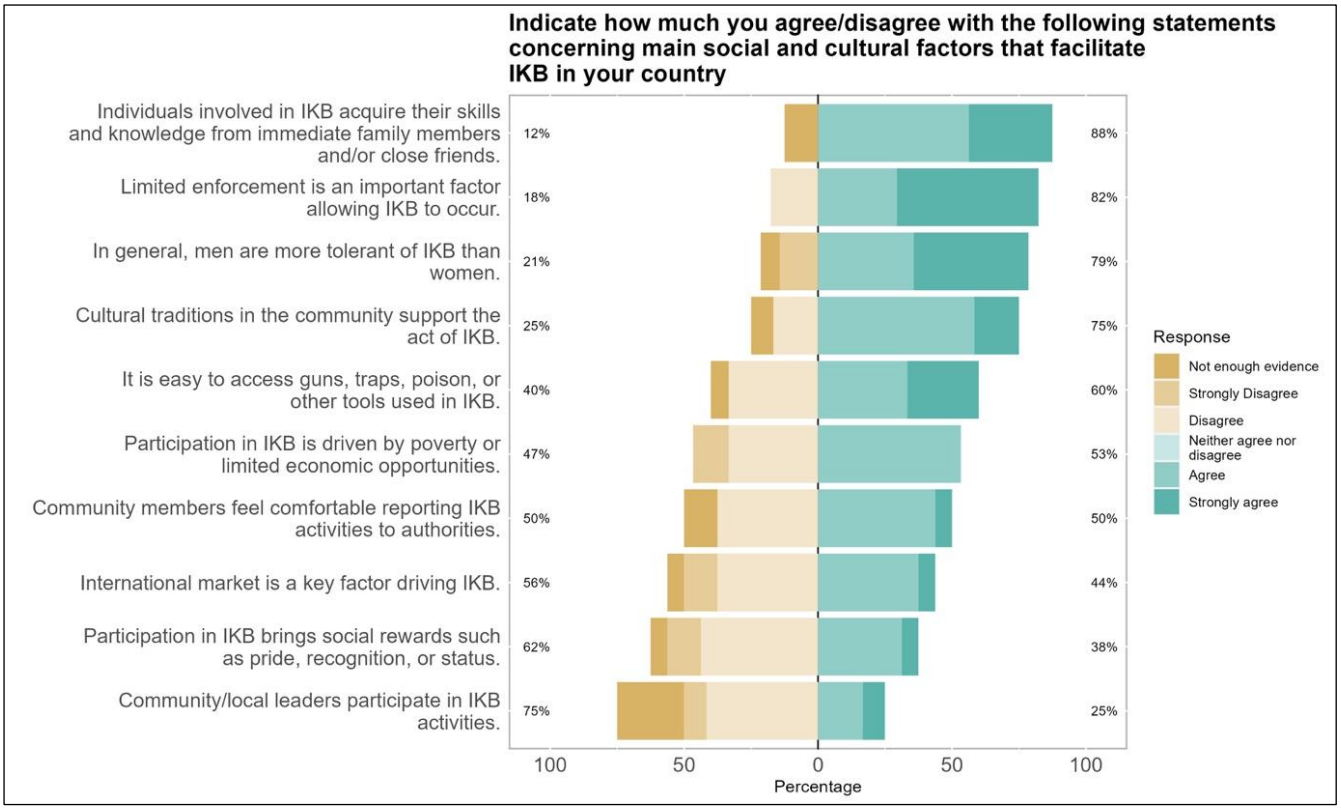
- Situational cost–benefit reasoning ("gains outweigh risks") is most prominent among national and local takers, indicating a degree of conscious calculation that may be more amenable to deterrence-based measures, provided enforcement is strengthened.
- Political protest is a minor but distinctive justification, cited almost exclusively in relation to national shooters (13%) and local shooters (8%). In these contexts, IKB appears to function as symbolic defiance against government rather than as an economic or subsistence activity. This framing makes it particularly resistant to regulatory approaches and may require engagement with underlying political unease.

The data also shows a high proportion of "don't know" responses, especially among poison users (35%) and international shooters (31%), signalling significant gaps in understanding how these groups justify their participation in IKB, or how they are captured.

What are the Drivers and Enabling Conditions of IKB?

The COM-B behavioural framework identifies opportunity as one of the key components shaping behaviour, referring to the external, physical and social factors that make a behaviour possible, easier, or more likely to occur (Michie et al., 2011). In this study, the opportunity component serves as the analytical lens through which the drivers and enabling conditions of IKB are examined. This distinction is theoretically significant: drivers refer to the systemic incentives that actively propel engagement in IKB, such as market demand, cultural tradition, and taxes, while enabling conditions are the structural and contextual factors that lower the barriers to participation and normalise the practice within communities, including weak law enforcement, corruption, and inadequate legal frameworks. Understanding both dimensions is essential for policy design: interventions that focus solely on changing individual attitudes or motivations will have limited impact if the external structural conditions that enable and sustain IKB remain in place (Challender & MacMillan, 2014; Kuiper et al., 2023).

Figure 8. Economic, Social and Cultural Factors influencing country-level IKB



Note: This figure shows the percentage of respondents who agreed, disagreed, or were neutral with each statement about country-level drivers and enabling conditions of IKB. Agreement percentages are shown to the right of centre, disagreement percentages to the left, and neutral responses in the middle.

Family and peer networks are the primary source of IKB knowledge and Skills

Most respondents (88%) reported that IKB skills and knowledge are acquired through family members or close friends, pointing to deeply embedded social transmission as a core mechanism sustaining the behaviour across generations. This pattern is particularly strong in Montenegro, Italy, Türkiye, Greece, and Cyprus, where respondents strongly agreed with this statement, and broadly confirmed across Egypt, Malta, France, Croatia, Israel, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Spain, where agreement was recorded. Only Serbia and Albania returned a neutral response, and no country disagreed, making this the most consistently endorsed enabling factor across the entire dataset. In COM-B terms, this reflects the capability dimension: the knowledge and skills needed to engage in IKB are not acquired individually but are passed down through trusted social networks (Michie et al., 2011). Where capability is rooted in close relationships and community norms, awareness-raising campaigns targeting individuals in isolation are unlikely to achieve lasting change, particularly where those same social circles remain tolerant of or involved in the practice (Rare & The Behavioural Insights Team, 2019).

IKB is culturally tolerated but lacks active endorsement and social prestige

Cultural tolerance: 75% agreed that cultural traditions in their community support IKB, while 25% disagreed (78% response rate). At the country level, strong agreement was recorded in Croatia and Italy, and agreement in Syria, France, Israel, Tunisia, Türkiye, Cyprus, and Spain. At the same time, Egypt

and Morocco were the only countries to disagree actively. It should be noted that this indicator measures a general perception of cultural tolerance towards IKB and does not distinguish between species or types of IKB. As a result, agreement at country level should not be read as evidence of broad cultural tolerance across all forms of IKB present in the countries. In France, for example, the most significant current threat is the illegal trapping of European Goldfinch, largely linked to export markets rather than traditional practice, and there is no documented evidence of cultural tolerance specific to this activity. This suggests that the recorded agreement may reflect tolerance towards other, more traditional practices rather than towards commercially driven trafficking.

Malta, Serbia, Algeria, Montenegro, Greece, and Albania returned neutral responses. These neutral responses should be interpreted with caution; they may reflect respondent uncertainty or limited knowledge of the topic, rather than an absence of cultural tolerance. Further consultation revealed, however, that Malta's neutral response reflected a specific methodological concern rather than uncertainty: respondents selected "neither agree nor disagree" to avoid overgeneralising about the hunting community. While isolated incidents of illegal killing are recognised in Malta and addressed through enforcement, respondents did not consider it accurate to characterise this as broadly supported by cultural traditions.

The disagreement recorded in Egypt and Morocco is particularly notable given documented levels of IKB in both countries. It points to a need for further community-level research to assess cultural tolerance among the groups directly engaging in these practices, disaggregated by IKB type.

Further consultations with countries highlighted the importance of not generalising that all forms of IKB are culturally motivated, reinforcing the need for species- and IKB type-specific data to avoid overstating the cultural dimension of IKB drivers.

Community leadership: 75% disagreed that community or local leaders participate in IKB, while 25% agreed (85% response rate). Strong disagreement was recorded in Greece, while Egypt strongly agreed, and Montenegro, Italy, and Algeria agreed. This suggests that, although IKB may be tolerated, it is not widely seen as actively endorsed by community leaders. However, the countries where leader involvement is perceived, particularly Egypt and Montenegro, may require targeted approaches that account for the potential role of the local authorities in normalising and legitimising the behaviour.

Social rewards: 62% disagreed that participation in IKB brings social rewards such as pride, recognition, or status, while 38% agreed (90% response rate). Agreement was concentrated in Algeria, Tunisia, Montenegro, Türkiye, Cyprus, and Albania, while Morocco and Greece strongly disagreed, and many European countries disagreed or returned a neutral response.

The overall finding is one of passive permissiveness rather than active endorsement: three-quarters of respondents recognise cultural traditions as a supporting factor, yet community leaders are largely not seen as participants, and social prestige is not consistently attached to the practice, although it may be a factor in specific types of IKB. This suggests that IKB is generally tolerated rather than celebrated, which reflects that culture is a real but uneven driver in particular contexts. However, in countries where social rewards are linked to IKB, researchers and policymakers should examine how these dynamics relate to one another. Without this understanding, strategies to address IKB risk remaining incomplete.

Gender as a driver of IKB tolerance and normalisation

Seventy-nine per cent of the respondents agreed that men are more tolerant of IKB than women, showing a gendered aspect to the way the behaviour is normalised. The statement was given a low response rate (68%), which could suggest that gender is a sensitive, controversial, or poorly researched topic. At the country level, strong agreement was found in Syria, Israel, Tunisia, Greece, Cyprus and Spain, and agreement was recorded in Egypt, France, Montenegro, Italy and Algeria. These findings confirm the gendered aspect in a variety of cultural and geographical settings. Yet Algeria and Türkiye were the only two countries to strongly disagree with the statement, implying that there is a different gender dynamic in these cases. These findings suggest that further investigation is needed before developing gender-specific behaviour change programmes across the region, since standard assumptions about gendered IKB dynamics may not be applicable.

Weak enforcement and easy access to tools are important drivers of IKB opportunities

Institutional conditions strongly influence opportunity. Weak or inconsistent enforcement was identified by 82% of respondents as a key factor enabling IKB, making it the most widely endorsed enabling factor in the dataset. At the country level, strong agreement was recorded in Syria, Bosnia, Israel, Algeria, Tunisia, Montenegro, Italy, Türkiye, and Greece, and agreement in Croatia, Serbia, Cyprus, and Spain. Only Egypt, Malta, and Morocco disagreed, and Albania returned a neutral response. Malta added that its enforcement systems are in place and functioning to address IKB; however, it recognises that practical limitations can affect enforcement outcomes in certain cases, and its response reflects an overall assessment of the system rather than case-specific variations. The lower response rate to this statement (68%) may suggest caution or sensitivity when assessing government performance.

Access to tools used in IKB is a significant enabler: 60% of respondents reported that guns, traps, or poison are easy to obtain, with high agreement in Montenegro, Italy, Türkiye, and Cyprus, and agreement in Bosnia, Croatia, and Israel. Morocco, Egypt, Albania, and Spain disagreed, showing significant variation in regulatory systems across the study area. It is important to note that IKB tools can include a wide range of instruments; as a result, in some countries certain tools, such as poisons, could be easier to obtain while others, such as guns and traps, could be harder to find. France's case illustrates this well: under the term "poison," which includes a wide range of products, some can be fairly easily accessed, yet guns and traps remain difficult to obtain there. These findings underscore the need also to disaggregate tool types when designing interventions.

Trust in institutions also varies considerably between countries. Responses were evenly split on whether people feel comfortable reporting IKB to authorities. Where institutions are strong, trusted, and responsive, public reporting can increase detection and constrain behaviour; where they are weak or distrusted, they reinforce a perception of impunity. Effective policy responses therefore need to go beyond reporting mechanisms and focus on rebuilding institutional relationships and community trust (Michie et al., 2014).

Economic drivers play a context-dependent role rather than a uniform one.

Poverty and limited economic opportunities: The proposition that participation in IKB is fundamentally driven by poverty or limited economic opportunities elicited a polarised response, with 53% agreeing and 47% disagreeing (90% response rate). This lack of consensus may reflect the genuinely diverse role of economic drivers across the different countries explored. At the country level, agreement was recorded in Syria, Egypt, Bosnia, Israel, Algeria, Türkiye, Morocco, and Greece, while France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Albania, and Spain disagreed, and strong disagreement was recorded in Malta. Serbia, Tunisia, and Montenegro returned neutral responses. This geographic pattern reveals that agreement is concentrated in countries where local-level actors are confirmed as low SES in the actor profiles, while disagreement is concentrated in countries where recreational and cultural motivations dominate, and actor profiles are higher SES. For some actors, particularly those operating at the local level, limited economic opportunities may play a real and significant enabling role, creating situations where IKB becomes a rational economic strategy to increase income (Duffy et al., 2016). For example, one country reported that national shooters mainly join international shooters in exchange for money as these actors cannot operate independently.

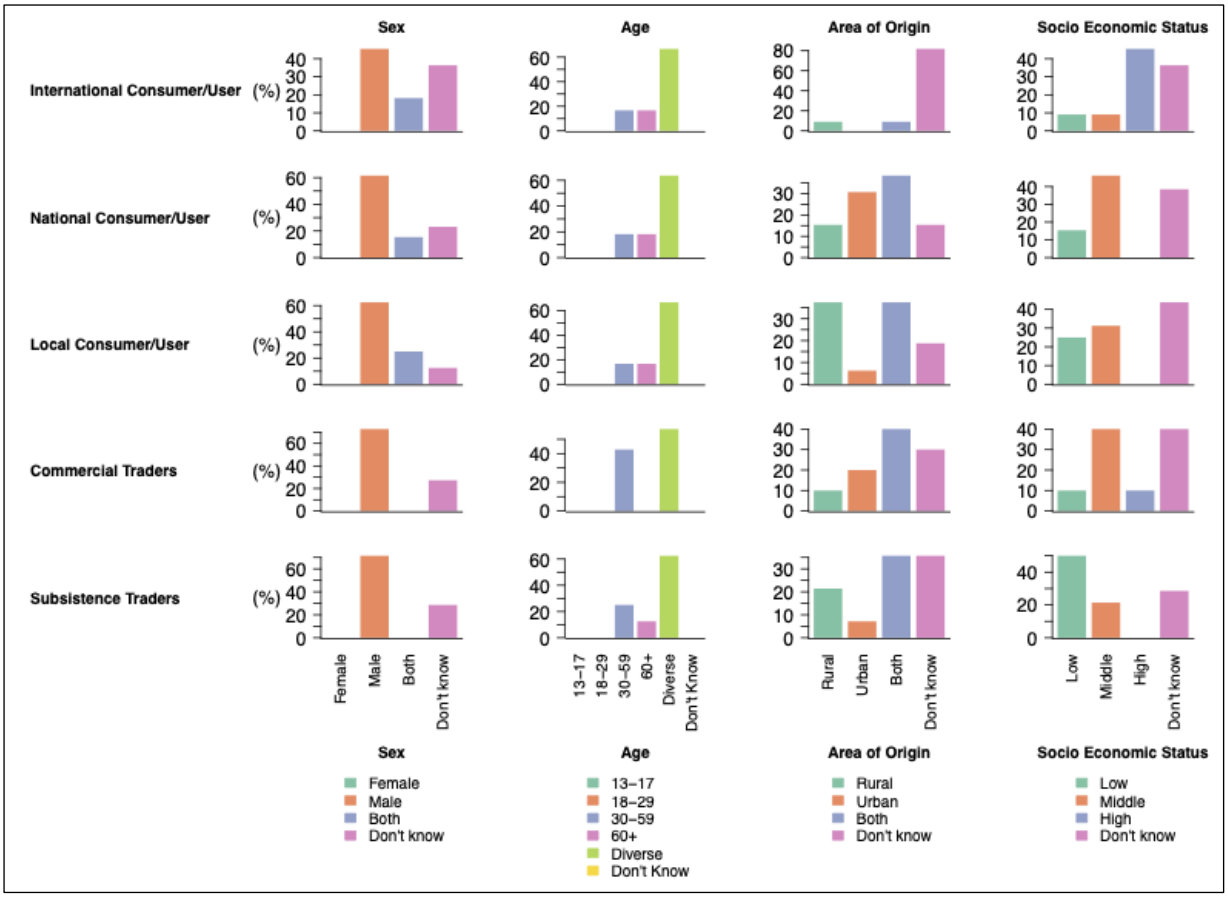
International market as a driver: The findings reveal that 56% of respondents do not consider international market demand to be a primary driver of IKB, while 44% do (95% response rate). The Syrian Arab Republic is the only country to strongly agree with this statement, placing it as the most externally oriented market in the dataset. Bosnia & Herzegovina, France, Croatia, Türkiye, Morocco, and Cyprus agreed, while Algeria and Tunisia strongly disagreed, and Montenegro and Italy returned neutral responses. This majority position suggests either that, across most countries and for most types of IKB, transnational trade or export demand is not a principal driver, or that respondents do not have a full picture of illegal trade occurring internationally but involving their country. A considerable element of demand appears to be fuelled by domestic market forces, local consumption patterns, and context-specific uses, indicating that, in some contexts, market dynamics operate primarily at a local scale. However, as indicated by the 44% of respondents for whom international market is a significant force there are clearly some types of IKB, such as falconry-driven IKB, international cage-bird trade, some types of food trade etc where international market forces are a significant driver and targeted interventions based on the realities of each context remain essential.

Section 2: IKB Demand

Who is behind the consumption, use and trade of IKB

This study also covers those who acquire or sell illegally obtained birds and eggs, referred to here as Consumers and Traders. For the purposes of this study, these groups were broken down into five distinct profiles: Local Consumers, National Consumers, and International Consumers, reflecting the geographic reach of demand; and Subsistence Traders and Commercial Traders, distinguishing those trading to meet basic needs from those operating at a larger commercial scale. Recognising these different roles matters, as each group sits at a different point in the supply chain and is likely to require a tailored response.

Figure 9. Socio-Economic Profile of Consumers/Users and Traders



Note: Percentages in Y axis, reflect the proportion of respondents reporting each characteristic for a given actor type.

International Consumers and Commercial Traders are the least understood groups. International Consumers were the only group to be associated with high income (42%). National consumers were identified as having a more urban or mixed urban-rural origin, and largely middle income, indicating a demand profile shaped by access, status, and preference. Local consumers are more rural and of middle-to-low income. Subsistence traders are the most clearly low-income and male-dominated group.

Data Limitations and "Don't Know" Responses: respondents did not know basic details about the actors involved, particularly for international actors. Area of Origin was the least known (up to 80% unknown for international profiles), and SES was also poorly known across all actors (25–40%). Sex and Age were better reported, with actors spanning a wide range of ages. These results should be seen as indicative, not definitive.

How are Birds and Eggs Sourced?

Understanding how illegally killed and taken birds and eggs are sourced, traded, and sold helps to identify how market forces or economic incentives shape IKB and how they operate across different levels of the supply chain. The structure of the trade chain, from harvesting to sale, reveals the social and economic conditions that make the practice not only feasible but financially rewarding and socially

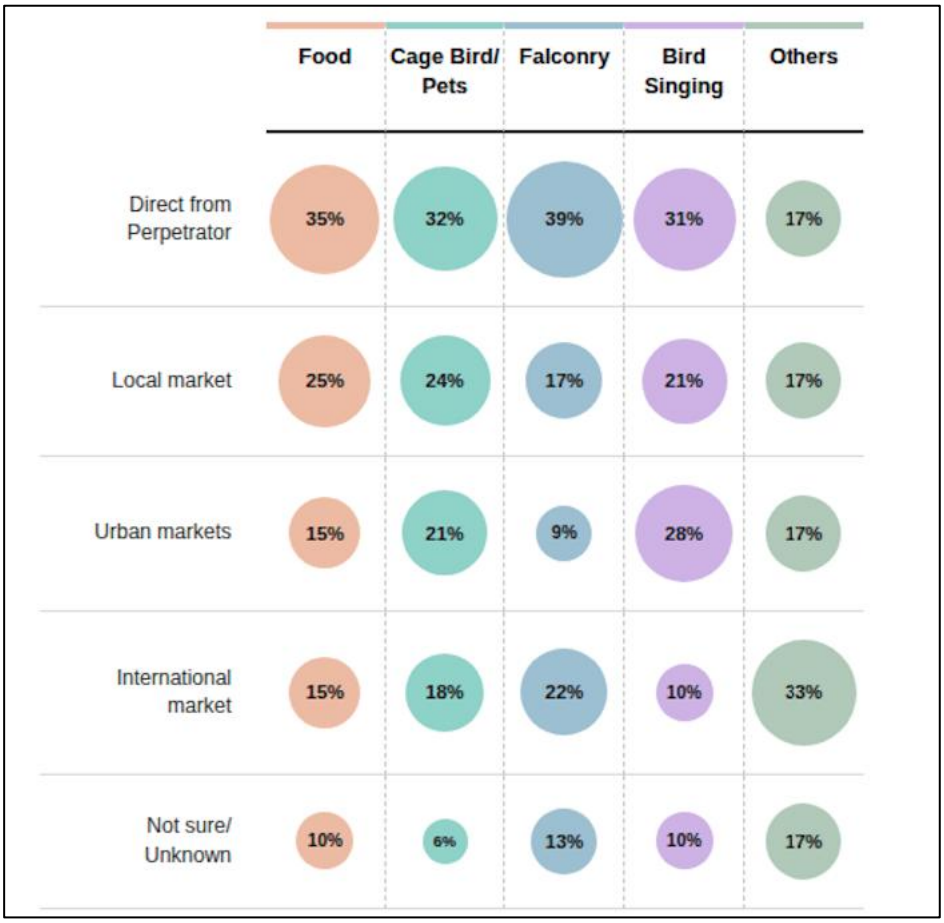
accepted within communities (Phelps et al., 2016; Lavorgna & Sajeva, 2021). Each stage of the chain provides different opportunities, and it is characterised by its own social interactions. For example, lowering barriers to participation, creating or reinforcing economic incentives, and embedding the practice within social networks that normalise non-compliance rather than render it transgressive (Michie et al., 2011; UNODC, 2024). This has direct policy implications: effectively reducing IKB requires dismantling the structural and social environment that sustains it, including the networks, markets, and norms that confer legitimacy on the practice, rather than focusing exclusively on the decisions of individual perpetrators (Challender & MacMillan, 2014).

Respondents were asked how consumers typically obtain illegally killed, trapped, or taken birds and eggs, broken down by purpose of use. Use categories were defined based on their prevalence in the region, as explained below:

- food,
- cage birds/pets,
- falconry,
- competitive bird singing, and,
- other uses (which captures other uses that may occur but were not common enough to have a separate category).

For each category, respondents selected the most common acquisition channel from six options: directly from the poacher or trapper; local market; urban market; international market; unknown/insufficient information; or other channels. Multiple selections were permitted.

Figure 10. Channels for sourcing birds for different categories of use



Note: Percentages reflect the proportion of respondents identifying each channel as a sourcing route for a given use category. As multiple responses were permitted, percentages do not sum to 100%.

Direct from Perpetrator is the main sourcing channel of IKB

The findings show that across all use categories, direct acquisition from the perpetrator is the dominant sourcing channel. This pattern highlights that IKB is primarily driven by local demand supported by informal social networks, rather than by formal or visible markets. Such trust-based transactions could create conditions of low perceived risk, limiting the reach of conventional enforcement (Phelps et al., 2016). Purchasing directly from the actor is present in Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia, Spain, Syria, Tunisia, and Türkiye, making the perpetrator the central node in the supply chain.

Qualitative data help to explain this pattern further. In some cases, the person committing IKB is also the one who uses or eats the bird, meaning no buyer or trader is involved. In Malta and Türkiye, when birds are caught illegally for food, poachers generally eat them together with their families. Serbia shows the same pattern: birds hunted for food are eaten by the hunter, and birds caught for falconry are kept by the person who caught them. This points to personal use as the main motivation, rather than financial gain, and is in line with the findings in the previous section, where local-level motivations were shown to be attached to tradition and culture. Qualitative data help to explain this pattern further.

In some cases, the person committing IKB is also the one who uses or consumes the bird, with no buyer or trader involved. In Türkiye, poachers generally consume the birds they kill with their family. Serbia shows the same pattern: birds hunted for food are eaten by the hunter, and birds caught for falconry are kept by the person who caught them. This points to personal use as the main motivation, rather than financial gain.

International Trade: Niche but Significant

International sourcing is less common overall but becomes significant for certain other uses and for falconry, pointing to niche but potentially high-value cross-border trade routes that have been documented in the broader wildlife crime literature (Ribeiro et al., 2019). The prominence of international markets specifically for falconry is a particularly notable finding, suggesting that the supply of wild-caught birds for this purpose is embedded in a distinct, globally connected trade network that operates beyond local supply chains and informal person-to-person transactions.

Qualitative data from three countries illustrate how this international dimension operates in practice. Regarding international market, in Croatia, respondents reported that Italian poachers operating within Croatian territory transport birds across the border into Italy, where they are likely sold, pointing to an organised, cross-border trafficking dynamic rather than opportunistic local trade. In Türkiye, trappers of both national and international origin are reported to play a significant role in the illegal capture and trade of certain bird species, further suggesting that, in this country, international actors are active participants in domestic IKB markets, not merely end consumers. Egypt also presents a distinct variant of this international dynamic: certain species shot and trapped domestically are sold in the Gulf region for eating and for other uses, for example, falconry, indicating that Egypt functions not only as a site of IKB but as a source country for Gulf markets.

What are the motivations behind the demand for IKB?

In this section, we examine how consumers, users, and traders describe their motivations for engaging with IKB, using five categories:

- luxury and delicacy,
- wild origin and rarity,
- birds' physical traits,
- revenue potential,
- high market price, and
- easy access.

These categories capture motivation and drivers related to what the behaviour delivers to the individual, what are the birds attributes the individual is looking for and what economic incentives are most influential.

Figure 11: Consumer/User and Trader Motivations reported by respondents



	Birds' physical traits	Wild origin Rarity	Revenue potential	Easy access	Luxury good Delicacy	High market price
EUROPE (N = 11)						
Local consumer/user	27%	18%	45%	73%	27%	36%
National consumer/user	27%	27%	27%	45%	36%	27%
International consumer/user	9%	36%	18%	9%	18%	9%
Subsistence traders	—	18%	27%	36%	9%	27%
Commercial traders	9%	9%	45%	9%	18%	45%
NORTH AFRICA (N = 4)						
Local consumer/user	25%	75%	25%	25%	50%	25%
National consumer/user	25%	75%	—	—	50%	—
International consumer/user	25%	50%	—	—	25%	—
Subsistence traders	25%	50%	75%	—	—	25%
Commercial traders	25%	50%	50%	—	—	25%
MIDDLE EAST (N = 3)						
Local consumer/user	67%	33%	67%	33%	33%	—
National consumer/user	100%	33%	100%	67%	67%	33%
International consumer/user	—	33%	67%	33%	67%	67%
Subsistence traders	67%	33%	100%	67%	33%	33%
Commercial traders	33%	67%	67%	33%	100%	100%

Rows do not sum to 100% — multiple characteristics could be cited simultaneously per country.

Note: Respondents could select multiple motivation categories for each consumer, user, and trader type. Percentages, therefore, reflect the proportion of respondents who identify each category as a motivation for a given actor type. Darker shading indicates higher percentages.

- **Consumer Regional Trends**

The three regions show clearly distinct demand profiles. In Europe, easy access is the defining characteristic for local consumers/users, confirming that availability, not species preference, is the primary enabler of consumption at the local level. Wild origin and rarity emerge as the leading driver for international consumers. In North Africa, wild origin and rarity dominates consumer/user demand at all three levels (local, national, international), with luxury good/delicacy as a consistent secondary factor. Easy access is more important for local actors.

- **Traders**

In Europe, subsistence traders are primarily driven by ease access, while commercial traders focus tightly on revenue potential and high market prices.

In North Africa, subsistence traders are driven primarily by revenue potential, with wild origin and rarity also significant, suggesting that the scarcity value of birds feeds directly into traders' motivation. Commercial traders show the same two leading factors (wild origin and rarity) equally, meaning rarity is commercially embedded, not just a consumer preference.

In the Middle East, the trader profile is the most complex. Subsistence traders cite revenue potential universally, with birds' physical traits and easy access also prominent. Commercial traders show the most concentrated luxury-oriented profile in the dataset: luxury good/delicacy and high market price are both cited by all three countries, with wild origin and revenue potential also prominent. This makes the Middle East the region where luxury status is as commercially central as price for traders.

Discussion

The study found that IKB across the Mediterranean is a complex, multi-motivated phenomenon shaped by overlapping economic, cultural, traditional, and social factors that vary in prominence across countries, a finding consistent with Brochet et al. (2016), Fairbrass et al. (2015), Elhalawani (2015) and BirdLife International & EuroNatur (2025). Actor profiles, motivations, drivers, and enabling conditions vary substantially across countries and subregions, and any attempt to apply a single regional characterisation risk obscuring how different elements interact to allow the persistence of IKB (BirdLife International & EuroNatur, 2025). This diversity shows that targeted, context-sensitive approaches are required to address the problem. Despite this diversity of factors, there are some interesting patterns to consider.

Participation in IKB is Male Dominated

In every group of actors in the dataset, IKB is almost entirely carried out by men, with no instances of female actors being recorded at any level or in any country. This result must be understood with an important methodological reservation: the absence of women in the survey does not necessarily mean that women are not involved in IKB. It could just as well be due to the way the survey was designed and to the fact that the data collection process made the involvement of direct actors more visible. What the data clearly show is that direct participation in IKB is dominated by men, and that 79% of the respondents believed that men are more tolerant of IKB than women, indicating a gendered aspect in the way the behaviour is socially normalised—one that should be considered in light of the broader acknowledgement that social, economic, and cultural inequalities between the sexes remain significant in the region (Union for the Mediterranean, n/d).

Another interesting finding is that experiential and social recognition motivations are particularly dominant among shooters across local, national, and international levels, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Italy, and Spain, consistent with the literature indicating that IKB in countries such as Cyprus, Malta, and France is tied to recreational factors, excitement, prestige, and social bonding linked to masculine culture and intergenerational male peer networks (BirdLife International & EuroNatur, 2025; Brochet et al., 2016).

Women can take an indirect yet significant role, for example, by being consumers, by living in households in which IKB is carried out, by taking part in the preparation or cooking of birds that have been illegally taken, trapped or traded for food, or by being part of the social networks that contribute to normalising the practice. In order to develop strategies that genuinely involve women, it is necessary to understand their own relationship with IKB, the extent of their tolerance, the indirect ways in which they are involved in consumption and in social normalisation, and the particular situations in which they

exert influence. In some cases women, as partners, family members and community members, might offer a valuable opportunity for intervention, but only if their views and limitations are properly understood first. Local power relations are important since, even if women hold attitudes that could lead to positive conservation outcomes, their limited political and social power may prevent them from bringing about change, and poorly conceived interventions could end up reinforcing rather than reducing their marginalisation. Carrying out qualitative, community-level research focusing on household dynamics, consumption patterns, and the social aspects of IKB, especially in contexts where food and cultural traditions are major drivers, would be a valuable and necessary step in exploring the potential contributions women could make to preventing IKB.

Local Participants in IKB are the Most Documented and Motivationally Diverse

Local actors are the best documented across all actor types in the dataset, which could reflect greater respondent familiarity with IKB activity at this level. This documentation advantage makes their motivational profile the most fully characterised, revealing a diverse combination of economic, cultural, social, and experiential motivations operating simultaneously. In general, cultural and traditional motivations are more prominent at the local scale than at any other. At national and international level, this complexity narrows: financial and commercial motivations become progressively more dominant, particularly among trappers and takers, producing profiles that are narrower and more economically oriented. This narrowing should be interpreted with some caution, however, as it may partly reflect limited respondent knowledge of national and international actors motivations. Nonetheless, these findings align with evidence from Cyprus, where large-scale trapping has been linked to organised gangs operating primarily for economic profit (BirdLife Cyprus et al., 2024), lending some external support to the pattern. These findings have direct implications for intervention design: strategies must be calibrated to the scale of the actor being targeted rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach. Enforcement and market disruption are likely more relevant for actors operating at national and international scale, while cultural engagement and community-based measures are more suited to the local scale.

Personal Networks as Capability Pathways: Family and Peer Transmission Sustains IKB Across Generations

Within the COM-B model, capability, including skills and knowledge, is central to understanding how IKB is sustained across generations. The finding that perpetrators are reported to be exclusively male and transmit both the tools and knowledge for IKB through family and close social networks points to a learned behaviour reinforced through peer influence and cultural identity, especially among boys and young men. These findings are linked with the observation from the literature that IKB practices are passed down through generations and are deeply embedded in local customs (BirdLife International & EuroNatur, 2025; Brochet et al., 2016). Counteracting these deeply embedded influences requires building alternative hobbies and pastimes, from an early age, through education, awareness-raising, and meaningful opportunities to engage positively with the natural environment in communities where IKB is prevalent.

Women and children within perpetrator families represent an important and often overlooked entry point: engaging them through positive nature-based activities could reshape household and community

norms over time. Further research into women's attitudes toward IKB, and into why some men perceive it as part of their cultural identity, would help identify whose voices to amplify and where capability-building efforts are most likely to shift behaviour at the community level.

Evidence Suggests that Perpetrators Share Certain Common Profiles and Motivations Across the Region

Shooters

Shooters as a group share the consistent male profile and the SES gradient noted above but diverge significantly in their motivational drivers across the actor types and scales. International shooters are almost exclusively motivated by thrill seeking, personal satisfaction, and social recognition, with financial and subsistence motivations negligible. National shooters retain experiential motivations as the dominant category but introduce contributions from cultural practice and food-based motivations, as well as a small subset whose behaviour is closer in logic to poison users, motivated by risk mitigation.

Local shooters are a motivationally heterogeneous group, combining recreational, subsistence, cultural, commercial, and land management drivers simultaneously, and cannot be treated as a homogeneous type at the regional level. Justification data reinforce this pattern. Economic necessity is prominent only among local shooters and concentrated in Middle Eastern and North African contexts. Tradition and heritage are cited across all three shooter scales and all regions, making it the most consistent justification in this category. Gains outweighing risks and peer normalisation appear primarily at the national and local level in European contexts. The act of protest governmental regulation is recorded at both national and local scales in a small number of European countries.

Trappers

National and local trappers share a common motivational foundation that clearly distinguishes the trapping category from shooters: hobbies related to the use of live birds, including falconry, cage bird keeping, and bird singing, are the dominant or co-dominant driver across for national and local trappers. This reflects a fundamentally different relationship with birds compared to shooters, one rooted in a different form of attachment and skills, and the use of birds alive rather than primarily for consumption or identity performance. Recreational experiential motivations are relatively less common across both national and local trapper, further reinforcing this distinction. However, in some countries, such as Italy and Cyprus, trappers are also linked to food motivations. These different purposes for trapping need completely different strategies as the motivations are quite different

The key difference between national and local trappers lies in the relative weight of financial motivations. Commercial gains and small earnings combined represent the largest motivational share for national trappers, while for local trappers these financial motivations make a substantial but secondary contribution to the dominant hobbyist motivation. Justification patterns are broadly consistent across both scales. '*Tradition and heritage', 'birds as a freely available resource', and 'gains outweighing risks'* are cited as justification across both national and local trappers in multiple contexts. However, for national Trappers "birds as a resource" is a more influential motivation and for local trappers the opportunistic behaviour is more prevalent. The justification that birds are a freely available

resource may reflect a lack of understanding that birds appearing plentiful at certain times of year are migratory, passing through from and to other destinations. It may also indicate that actors hold a utilitarian view that if birds are there, why not use them.

Demographically, both national and local actors, are consistently male but diverge in SES and education: national trappers tend towards middle SES and secondary education, while local trappers are predominantly low SES and primary educated. Qualitative evidence additionally links local trappers in a few countries to socially marginalised communities, a dimension with important implications for how enforcement, alternative livelihoods and outreach are designed to avoid further marginalization.

Takers

National and local takers are the most motivationally similar, sharing the same core motivations, specifically, financial gains and hobbyist uses of live birds. This shared profile mirrors the pattern observed for trappers. Within this shared profile, the balance shifts predictably with scale: hobbyist motivations are more prevalent for local takers, while financial and commercial gains become more dominant for those operating nationally. Cultural practices make a more significant contribution at the local level, consistent with the broader cross-cutting pattern whereby cultural embeddedness strengthens at local level. Justification patterns are broadly consistent across national and local scales: '*tradition and heritage'*, the view of birds as a freely available resource, and gains outweighing risks are cited across both national and local takers in multiple regional contexts. Economic necessity is more prominent among local takers, consistent with their generally lower socioeconomic profile.

Demographically, however, the two groups diverge significantly. National takers exhibit the greatest demographic variability of any actor type in the entire dataset, spanning from low to high SES, primary to higher education, and under 20 to over 60 years of age across different countries. Local takers, while also variable, present a more consistent profile, predominantly low to middle SES, rural, and primary to secondary educated. Unknown motivations and justifications represent a significant share for both types, particularly for local takers, and are especially prevalent across North Africa and parts of Europe where broader data coverage is also weakest. This compounded evidence gap limits the reliability of any characterisation of takers in those contexts and points to a priority area for further primary research.

Poison Users

Poison users are the most clearly defined and motivationally homogeneous actor type in the dataset. Risk mitigation motivations, specifically predator control, are dominant, with a concentration that has no parallel among any other actor type. This suggests that poison use in the IKB context appears to be a functional behaviour: birds are poisoned, mostly indirectly, when farmers or land managers attempt to protect their agricultural land from a perceived threat, for example wolves and foxes, which has an economic dimension in terms of protecting their livelihood and maximising profit. This finding is consistent with the literature, which identifies predator control as an important driver of IKB particularly in Spain and Greece (Life-eurokite, 2015; BirdLife International, 2011; Council of Europe, 2023; Brochet et al., 2016).

Overall, the broad motivational distinction between actor types is sufficiently clear to be analytically useful. Shooters are primarily experientially motivated; trappers and takers are primarily driven by

hobbyist and financial motivations; and poison users, not surprisingly, mainly motivated by risk mitigation linked to land and livestock management. These distinctions are meaningful and should be considered when designing intervention approaches to address IKB.

The Enabling Conditions and Drivers of IKB are Heterogeneous and Context-Dependent

The findings presented in this report suggest that the enabling conditions and drivers of IKB are heterogeneous, appearing to vary across actor types, and regional contexts. These findings should be interpreted with caution: the dataset reflects national authority focal point perceptions rather than community or perpetrator level insights and has important gaps, response rates vary across countries and actor types, and the evidence base is considerably stronger for some contexts than for others. What the data point toward, rather than conclusively demonstrate, is that no single factor consistently drives or enables IKB across the Mediterranean, and that a uniform regional response is unlikely to be equally effective across the diversity of contexts documented in this report. The more productive question may therefore not be what drives IKB in the region, but what specific combination of conditions appears to sustain it in each context, and what interventions might most plausibly address those conditions. Despite this diversity, some patterns emerged, as described below:

Limited enforcement acts as an enabler

Limited enforcement is among the most consistently endorsed enabling conditions in the dataset, with most countries agreeing or strongly agreeing that it is an important factor allowing IKB to occur. A notable minority disagrees, suggesting that in some country contexts other structural factors, particularly economic incentives, may play a more primary enabling role than enforcement gaps. This finding, which appears across multiple actor types and regional contexts, indicates that strengthened and credible enforcement could, in principle, increase the perceived risk of participation for some actors. However, there are important reasons why despite its importance it should not be the only response strategy. Intergenerational skill transmission is widely endorsed across the dataset as an enabling condition, pointing to a social reproduction of the practice that is too complex to be disrupted by enforcement measures alone. Cultural traditions and easy access to tools are further enabling conditions with broad endorsement. Taken together, these findings suggest, though do not conclusively demonstrate, that in a substantial number of countries IKB is not simply an enforcement problem but a behaviour embedded in social relationships, cultural practical, and structural conditions that operate to some degree independently of legal deterrence.

Culture operates as an enabling condition, more than a driver, in most contexts.

The study found that cultural traditions consistently rank as a high-scoring justification across actor types, with 75% of respondents agreeing that cultural traditions in their community's support IKB. This is consistent with findings across the literature documenting how practices such as Egypt's historically rooted hunting traditions and songbird trapping in Italy, Malta, and Cyprus are passed down through generations (BirdLife International & EuroNatur, 2025; Brochet et al., 2016; Elhalawani, 2015). However, in this study culture does not appear to drive IKB directly. What the data suggest more consistently is that culture functions as an enabling condition, one that lowers the social cost of

participation, enables intergenerational skill transmission, and reduces the internal conflict people might otherwise feel by framing illegal practices as culture or tradition. This distinction may matter both analytically and practically. Actors do not typically appear to experience IKB as wrongdoing, which suggests that interventions relying solely on awareness-raising or legal deterrence may be unlikely to succeed where cultural legitimisation is strong.

Tradition and social identity are the most frequently cited justifications across nearly all actor types, suggesting that IKB is in many settings rooted in group identity and reproduced through family and community networks rather than institutional channels. In most countries, local leaders are reported not to endorse IKB, which could indicate that the activity is culturally tolerated within specific social groups rather than actively promoted across whole communities, a distinction that points toward targeted norm-change work within particular communities rather than broad community engagement strategies. Egypt stands apart as the only country where strong agreement was recorded that community and local leaders actively participate in IKB, with qualitative evidence further suggesting that trapping is becoming a normalised activity. This is compounded by evidence that quail trapping along the coast, conducted using illegally mist-nets at scale, is resulting in significant bycatch, with a wide range of species caught beyond the target quail (Elhalawani, 2015).

Where leaders are themselves participants, strategies that rely on community structures as entry points for enforcement or behaviour change are likely to be less effective. Interventions should instead be designed with an understanding of the role this activity plays within local communities, including the economic role it may play in complementing household income, and should seek to work with local leadership to identify pathways toward more sustainable practices rather than positioning enforcement as the primary strategy.

Economic Drivers provide incentives for participating in IKB, but are uneven across the region

Economic necessity is an influential driver, but shapes context differently

The study found financial gain to be a strong motivation across actor types and countries, consistent with findings from Brochet et al. (2016), Fairbrass et al. (2015) and Elhalawani (2015). However, where economic factors appear relevant, they tend to operate less as a matter of survival and more as a means of supplementing existing income, suggesting that economic motivation may function as an income-complementing activity or as a strategy to protect livelihoods, such as in the case of poison users. However, the polarised result on poverty as a driver reflects the heterogeneous role of economic factors across contexts and cautions against treating economic necessity as either universal or irrelevant. Empirical studies have noted that in some contexts, such as Egypt, some IKB may be driven by lack of economic alternatives and the need for affordable protein for some communities (Elhalawani, 2015), suggesting that the survey findings should be interpreted with caution and confirmed through further country-level research. Where economic need does appear to play a role, the development of alternative livelihoods is likely to be an important component of any effective response in the cases where lack of economic opportunities exists (Rare & The Behavioural Insights Team, 2019; Elhalawani, 2015),).

IKB demand is locally driven

Direct acquisition from the perpetrator is the dominant sourcing channel across all use categories, and that in a substantial number of cases, the perpetrator and the consumer are the same person. Direct person-to-person exchanges appear to be built on trust, social proximity, and shared complicity, not anonymous commercial relationships but exchanges between people linked by kinship, community, or long-standing social ties. Such trust-based transactions create conditions of low perceived risk and shared complicity that limit the reach of conventional enforcement (Phelps et al., 2016), as respondents from Montenegro explicitly noted: kinship and personal connections make it very difficult to address problems and perpetrators, particularly in smaller or more tightly knit communities. The finding that 56% of respondents do not consider international market demand a primary driver of IKB reinforces this picture: for a substantial proportion of countries and forms of IKB, the behaviour is predominantly domestically contained and locally embedded, rather than driven by organised transnational trade. This is consistent with evidence that most wild meat trade operates at local and national scale (Kümpel et al., 2026).

This has a deceptively simple but important implication for intervention design. Addressing IKB in these cases would require understanding what is sustaining local demand and engaging directly with the motivations, norms, and social relationships that protect it from outside scrutiny. Supply-side enforcement alone is insufficient when the behaviour is driven by demand embedded in social identity and informal networks (Phelps et al., 2016), interventions must instead engage with community identity and cultural practice directly (Rare & The Behavioural Insights Team, 2019), rather than focusing on market disruption or enforcement strategies alone.

International Market is Linked to Specific Forms of IKB

However, the role of international markets should not be underestimated. The data suggest that international market demand is considered a relevant driver by 44% of respondents, a proportion that calls attention even if it does not represent the majority view. A more precise reading suggests that international markets matter selectively rather than uniformly, appearing most significant for taking and trapping, including for falconry and cage bird trade. This selectivity is further reflected in regional demand profiles among international consumers, which point to a consistent underlying logic across the Mediterranean: in Europe, wild origin and rarity emerge as the leading driver, while in North Africa the same factor dominates with luxury value as a secondary consideration, and in the Middle East international consumers appear oriented toward revenue potential, luxury value, and high market price. Across all three regions, international demand appears driven by exclusivity, prestige, and economic revenue potential rather than the availability and accessibility factors more characteristic of local consumption. It is important to recognise that more research is needed on this topic, as these findings are probably underestimations, given the covert nature of international trafficking and the high rates of unknown responses across several use categories.

Regional Patterns should be read with caution

The data collected across the Mediterranean region provide an uneven picture of who engages in IKB and why. Several consistent patterns emerge across countries and actor types, offering a basis for

broader interpretation, but significant structural gaps in the evidence base mean that regional generalisations should be treated with caution. What the data support most confidently are contextual findings, patterns that hold within specific countries or actor groups, rather than uniform conclusions applicable across the Mediterranean as a whole.

Europe

- The most analytically significant motivational pattern in Europe is the prominence of hobbyist motivations, specifically cage birds and bird singing, across trappers and takers in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Greece, Spain, and Italy. In some cases, this is not simply a motivational category but is linked to cultural practices. The keeping and competitive display of live wild-caught birds could be creating a sustained demand for wild birds.
- In Europe, most respondents agree or strongly agree that limited enforcement is the most widely endorsed enabling condition across the region. However, the additional strong endorsement of cultural traditions as an enabling factor in Croatia and Italy, and of intergenerational skill transmission in Italy, Montenegro, Cyprus, and Greece, suggests that strengthening enforcement, although important, would be insufficient in these contexts and may need to be accompanied by other strategies.

Middle East

The Middle Eastern dataset covers three countries, the Syrian Arab Republic, Israel, and Türkiye, the profiles of which diverge sufficiently to make any single regional characterisation potentially misleading. Nonetheless there are some interesting common patterns across these countries.

- The clearest convergence is in the motivational profile of shooters: food and financial motivations dominate for local and national shooters in the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye, while cultural traditions and personal satisfaction lead in Israel. This distinction broadly maps onto a difference between economic-oriented and culturally oriented shooting and has direct implications for intervention design.
- In the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye, addressing the economic conditions that make this activity so attractive and, maybe, even necessary is as relevant as any awareness or enforcement intervention. In Israel, the cultural and identity-based dimensions of shooting, reinforced by the act of protest justification recorded alongside tradition and heritage, suggest a different set of social dynamics that call for the recovery public support for governmental policies.
- Türkiye represents the most complex case in this subregion and, arguably, in the Mediterranean. Its enabling factor profile is the most extensively endorsed across all countries surveyed, with "strongly agree" recorded for '*limited enforcement', 'easy access to tools', and 'intergenerational skill transmission'*, and "agree" recorded for *cultural traditions, international market demand, and poverty* as drivers. This convergence of structural, cultural, and economic conditions sustains that in this country multiple factors are reinforcing IKB suggesting that simultaneously and complementary strategies are needed. Further complexity is added by qualitative evidence indicating that both national and international trappers play a significant role in the illegal capture and trade of certain bird species, pointing to a cross-border supply chain dimension that extends the challenge beyond domestic policy alone.

North Africa

North Africa presents the most challenging analytical picture of the three regions because the data gaps are so extensive that patterns are difficult to distinguish from absence of information.

- The most analytically significant pattern in North Africa is the divergence within the region regarding what drives IKB at the local level. Egypt records cultural traditions and food as joint primary motivations for trappers, supported by qualitative evidence describing actors as predominantly fishermen and small-scale farmers, suggesting a profile in which IKB is embedded simultaneously in cultural tolerance and economic opportunity. Tunisia records food, commercial profits and thrill-seeking as primary motivations for local shooters, introducing a recreational dimension alongside practical reasons. Morocco records personal satisfaction and commercial profits. These different profiles within a single regional group suggest that North Africa is motivationally diverse as a region and that country-specific approaches are necessary even within the same region.
- Morocco's recording of disagreement with both limited enforcement and cultural traditions as enabling conditions is analytically interesting because it sits alongside a predominantly commercial motivation profile for trappers and takers and an economic justification. This combination suggests that in Morocco, IKB may be sustained primarily by economic incentives in addition to enforcement gaps or cultural normalisation, a distinct profile that would call for supply-chain and market-focused interventions rather than enforcement strengthening or cultural engagement alone. However, the extreme lack of data for Morocco across other variables means this interpretation remains tentative.

Limitations of the Study

Several important data limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this report. The data reflect the perceptions of CMS MIKT National Focal Points rather than empirical research or direct accounts from perpetrators and should be interpreted accordingly. Response rates and data coverage vary considerably across countries and actor types, with six countries not completing the survey and significant demographic gaps recorded. A high proportion of "don't know" responses signal further gaps in respondent knowledge for these groups. Findings on international markets are likely underestimates given the covert nature of cross-border trafficking, and the gender dimension of IKB is probably underrepresented, as the absence of female actors from the dataset may reflect how the survey was designed rather than their actual absence from IKB related practices. Taken together, these limitations mean that the findings are best understood as a first regional overview that identifies patterns and themes for further investigation, rather than a definitive account of IKB drivers and motivations across the Mediterranean.

Links Between Report Findings and Rome Strategic Plan (RSP) Objectives

The report provides a regional overview of IKB motivations, drivers and enabling conditions in the Mediterranean in contribution towards Objective 1 of the RSP (Understanding the scope, scale and motivations behind illegal killing, taking and trade of birds). The recommendations section of this report focuses on providing insights about how to address the high-level issues relating to motivations and drivers of IKB already identified in this regional overview report, but further work is needed nationally in each country to reduce knowledge gaps and better target interventions. There are many objectives of the Rome Strategic Plan for which a full understanding of motivations and drivers nationally is needed to target interventions effectively including under any National IKB Action Plan, the key process objective of the RSP.

There may be additional entities such as universities/ research institutes, social science experts or NGOs within the national context who could help develop strategies to fill knowledge gaps, ensure intervention strategies could be well-targeted to be effective and could be valuable contributors to any multi-stakeholder committee formed to oversee development and implementation of the National Action Plan. Understanding fully the motivations and drivers behind IKB is essential to delivering national prevention strategies, the key focus of Objective 2 of the Rome Strategic Plan (establishing an active prevention of the illegal killing, taking and trade of birds).

While achieving compliance of IKB perpetrators with the laws and regulations is of critical importance and a key aim of IKB prevention efforts, a dominant theme across responses is that weak enforcement enables IKB, as does the ready availability of the tools used to enact IKB. This point links to Objective 4 of the Rome Strategic Plan (Ensuring that effective and efficient enforcement of relevant legislation is undertaken) and points to an urgent need to reinforce enforcement mechanisms. Some countries identified direct and visible enforcement as the primary requirement for reducing IKB.

Legal and regulatory frameworks must not only be robust on paper but be effectively implemented in practice. This relates to Objective 3 of the RSP **(**Ensure that the illegal killing of birds is addressed effectively and efficiently in national legislation) and Objective 5 (Ensuring effective and efficient justice for IKB-related offences). Respondents, for example, emphasised the importance of deterrent legislation, particularly effective financial sanctions, and ensuring that judicial procedures are followed through to completion. Some stressed that the judiciary must recognise the seriousness of IKB cases to ensure meaningful prosecution and sentencing and recommended the establishment of centralised national databases integrating enforcement and judicial data to ensure consistency and accountability.

Conclusions

This study shows that IKB in the Mediterranean is a behaviour shaped by a mix of motivations, drivers and enabling factors that differ across countries and types of actors. Using the COM-B framework, the findings show how financial gain, recreational habits, and cultural traditions interact with individual skills and social, economic and political factors in ways that vary significantly across contexts. This

means that one-size-fits-all responses are unlikely to work; policies need to be tailored to the specific motivations and circumstances driving the diverse types of IKB in each country.

Equally important are the conditions that make IKB easy and socially acceptable. Weak enforcement, the passing of skills through families and communities, easy access to equipment, and a general tolerance of the practice all contribute to keeping it in place, often regardless of whether stricter rules exist on paper. Gender is also relevant: men are significantly more likely to participate in and tolerate IKB than women, which means behaviour change programmes can be designed differently for each group, and women may represent an underused entry point for change in some communities. However, this pattern does not hold equally across all countries, so gender-targeted approaches should be tested and adapted at country level rather than applied as a blanket assumption. Because people's skills, motivations, and the environment around them all reinforce one another, policies that focus on only one of these dimensions are unlikely to bring about lasting change. A meaningful response requires understanding and working on the most influential components.

The Rome Strategic Plan sets out a clear long-term vision: the eradication of IKB, with a commitment to reduce IKB in the Mediterranean by at least 50% by 2030 to drive progress towards this vision. At the midpoint of the plan, success depends on effective, coordinated, and sustained action to address IKB across all Mediterranean countries, with greater urgency in countries with high levels of IKB severity. Achieving the 2030 goal requires each country to develop a robust understanding of the drivers, enabling conditions and motivations of IKB in its national context to inform effective strategies to address them. Learning from each other to capitalise on collective progress internationally will be important and will accelerate impact across the region. Strong, national multistakeholder collaborations will be essential to mobilise the full range of skills, resources and influence required to address IKB successfully.

While national contexts differ, several recurring themes emerge across countries, highlighting a clear set of priorities for action. It is important to recognise that motivations, drivers and enabling conditions are diverse, making country-specific approaches necessary even within the same subregion.

Recommendations for addressing drivers and motivations at Regional and Country Level

In many Mediterranean countries, the issue of IKB would also benefit from more government involvement in awareness-raising and behavioural change work

Many countries recognise awareness-raising and behaviour change interventions as important tools for shifting attitudes and reducing illegal practices. The study showed that motivations vary considerably across actor types and contexts, and that drivers and enabling conditions operate differently across regions; strategies must therefore be tailored to the specific context and form of IKB being addressed. Similarly, this study highlights the role of family networks and cultural transmission through family and peer relationships, further reinforced by community tolerance or ambivalence, a pattern that targeted behaviour change initiatives must seek to disrupt. When well-designed and adequately resourced, behaviour change can be more effective than enforcement alone, not by compelling people

to stop, but by reshaping what their communities consider normal. To achieve this, programmes must work with local culture rather than against it (Mirin and Klinck, 2021).

Interventions should be tailored to the specific motivations driving IKB in each context: someone acting out of economic need requires a very different response from someone motivated by tradition, sport, or status. Since IKB is carried out predominantly by men and boys, programmes should seek to engage them through trusted individuals within their own networks, rather than relying solely on official channels or education campaigns. Critically, where IKB is financially motivated, behaviour change initiatives must be paired with practical livelihood alternatives, as calling on people to stop without addressing the underlying need is rarely effective (Mirin and Klinck, 2021). Finally, in some countries, successful behaviour changes strategies developed by NGOs or other national stakeholders could be scaled up by government authorities or replicated in other locations to achieve broader impact.

Ensuring a mechanism for collaborative stakeholder engagement to address IKB is in place nationally and that social science expertise is included is strongly recommended.

Given the complexity of IKB, many countries emphasised the need for coordinated, multi-stakeholder approaches. This aligns well with the RSP process Objective to develop and deliver NAP with involvement from a multistakeholder NAP committee. These committees, bringing together all relevant stakeholders, can facilitate greater cooperation among responsible agencies and institutions, enabling IKB to be addressed at multiple levels for maximum impact. Valuable contributors to any multi-stakeholder committee include universities and research institutes, social science experts, and NGOs within the national context, who could help develop strategies to fill knowledge gaps and ensure interventions are well-targeted.

This reflects a broad recognition that isolated efforts are insufficient and that structured cooperation enhances impact. National Action Plans provide the key tool for addressing the issues raised above – outlining shared priorities, assigning responsibilities to relevant stakeholders and facilitating coordinated action.

Financial gain, including profit from commercial trade, emerges as a key motivator for several types of IKB, highlighting the need for stronger proactive detection and strengthening of enforcement to reduce opportunities and increase risks to perpetrators, alongside more deterrent prosecution rates and penalties.

Increasing detection and enforcement efforts, as well as the chance of prosecution and the scale of penalties, could all help tip the balance for potential perpetrators thinking about whether to engage in IKB. Nationally, focussing efforts on physical local and urban markets, key channels for the sale and procurement of IKB, could increase the perceived risk for perpetrators and help to disrupt relatively local illegal supply chains. In contrast, international collaboration will be crucial for reducing IKB for falconry where international markets were found to be a significant channel. In situations where there is an organised crime element to IKB innovative investigative techniques used in other areas of crime

could be relevant, as could use of non-environmental legal instruments more focused on prosecuting organised crime, which may have stronger associated penalties.

The equipment used for IKB is too easily available to perpetrators and more focus is needed on addressing this through legislation, regulation and enforcement

With 60% of respondents reporting that guns, nets, or poison are easy to obtain, finding means to restrict their availability and use by perpetrators is very important. The legislative guidance provided by MIKT and the Bern Convention contain important guidance in this regard (CMS, 2022a).

In countries with significant IKB, education in schools is a vital tool to prevent future IKB and create a step-change between generations. National authorities are well-positioned to engage with education authorities and work with other stakeholders to ensure the curriculum covers relevant environmental topics.

The report showed that IKB skills are learned through family/peers, a dynamic that needs to be addressed through education. Across countries, education is framed not merely as information dissemination, but as a tool for long-term cultural and behavioural transformation. Younger generations can develop a more positive relationship with environment and their natural heritage through the curriculum taught at all levels of education from nursery, through primary, secondary and tertiary education and opportunities for field excursions to experience nature can be transformative.

Tradition emerges as a strong justification for IKB perpetrators across the region, further work is needed to develop and share effective interventions to address this common issue.

Where tradition is a strong element, awareness raising and enforcement/ judicial deterrence are unlikely to be sufficient. There are good examples across different areas of social science of cultural practices and traditions being successfully addressed and there may be opportunities to apply some of the techniques from these wider examples to IKB. This is especially relevant in contexts where IKB is culturally tolerated but not actively promoted by local leaders, nor reinforced through social rewards or status, factors that may create meaningful openings for changing how people think and act regarding IKB. There are also many emerging examples of behaviour change and other interventions having success in tackling tradition-related motivations, where the approaches could be scaled up or modified and applied in other national contexts. Traditions can be difficult to change, but in many cases the traditions driving IKB may be specific to particular groups within society and tolerance of IKB among other groups may be much lower, providing opportunity to target interventions to address the traditions among perpetrators, while building support and awareness against IKB among other groups to reduce perpetrators perception that their activities are endorsed by society.

Further work is needed to identify and fill knowledge gaps at national level working with other stakeholders and making use of available guidance

This first regional assessment of perceptions on IKB provides an overview of the current state of knowledge and some interesting insights into what may be motivating and driving IKB in different countries. However, it is perception, rather than data-based results, and responses indicate that in many countries in the Mediterranean there are few other sources of information on the motivations and drivers behind IKB.

National stakeholders are encouraged to:

- Identify, articulate and address national knowledge gaps under their NAP
- Make use of the available guidance methodology to conduct socio-economic research into the motivations behind IKB. This guidance includes approaches to address sensitive topics including types of language to use in the design and delivery of such studies and methods which allows individuals to provide sensitive information without admitting to involvement (CMS, 2023).
- Identify other entities such as universities, research institutes and NGOs who have useful expertise to assist (in contribution to RSP objective 1.2b)
- Develop studies to check assumptions and strengthen the evidence base, focusing on direct accounts from individuals involved in IKB. This will improve understanding of the capabilities enabling participation and further explore the motivations of those who travel elsewhere to engage in these activities. Questions should be designed to inform better the development of effective actions under the country's NAP, while advancing with 'no-regret' measures to tackle IKB.
- Consider gender dynamics and different roles, and the potential for stakeholders in urban/ rural environments or stakeholders of different ages to differ in motivations/ drivers and consider what information could help in the formulation of strategies to prevent future IKB among children as well as target current perpetrators/ enablers.

International cooperation and experience sharing between countries will continue to be vital to catalysing and enabling progress towards reducing IKB in the Mediterranean and beyond

While the context of IKB in each country is different, there are many commonalities among IKB perpetrators, IKB methods, the contexts of culture and tradition, the economic drivers and potential strategies to tackle the issue between countries. In addition, there is sometimes a cross-border element to IKB, so further efforts to share experience and work to address IKB in cooperation would be beneficial. This could include:

- Sharing and translating methodologies, reports, tools and plans from different countries within MIKT/ Bern
- Dedicated sessions within MIKT/ Bern Convention meetings, webinars or workshops to share this experience or specific approaches or develop capacity
- Specific expertise exchange between countries with similar interests in relation to understanding motivations and drivers and using this to develop IKB intervention strategies

- Specific collaborative work to identify drivers and motivations behind cross-border IKB and develop joint strategies between countries for interventions tackling the issue
- Encouragement to international bodies to facilitate cross-border enforcement or judicial cooperation, particularly where coordinated action in more than one country is necessary.

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www.cms.int/taskforce/mikt

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Annexes:

1. Annex 1: The Survey Questionnaire

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IKB Drivers and Motivations Survey

3. Please, Tell Us About Yourself

* 1. Which country are you submitting information about?

* 2. What is the name of the institution you represent?

* 3. How do you identify your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to say

* 4. Which of the following categories best describes your employment status?

- ◯ Supervisor/Manager/Coordinator
- ◯ Professional/Technical/Specialyst
- ◯ Program Officer/Analyst
- ◯ Administrative
- ◯ Other

If you selected Other, can you please specify?

* 5. For how long have you been the MIKT focal point for your country?

- ◯ Less than 2 years
- ◯ Between 2 to 5 years
- ◯ Between 5 to 8 years
- ◯ More than 8 years
- ◯ Other

If you selected “Other,” can you please specify?

IKB Drivers and Motivations Survey

4. Final Remark Before Starting the Technical Phase

- **When completing each question in the survey, please remember that every piece of information you can share is valuable—whether it comes from official data, research, participatory observation, or your own personal experience.**
- **If you come across a question for which there is no available evidence, feel free to choose "I don't know" or "there is not enough evidence".**
- **If the provided answer choices are not related to your country, please select “Not applicable (N/A)” or leave it blank.**

Thank you for your participation

* 1. How frequent are the following IKB methods in your country? (Select only the options that apply for your country)

	Very common – occurs frequently across the country	Moderately common – occurs in some areas but not everywhere	Not very common – occurs only in limited locations	Rare – occurs very infrequently	Never
Illegal Shooting	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Illegal Trapping	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Illegal Taking	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Illegal Poisoning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

If you selected 'Other,' could you tell us what this method involves?

* 2. Are there specific times of the year when certain IKB methods are more frequently used in your country? (Select only the options that apply to your country)

	Yes, during spring migration	Yes, during autumn migration	Yes, during breeding season	Yes, during specific times	No, it occurs throughout the year	Other
Illegal Shooting	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Illegal Trapping	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Illegal Taking	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Illegal Poisoning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

If you selected 'during specific times" or 'Other,' could you tell us what these times are?



3. Which bird groups are most frequently illegally killed/taken in your country, and by which methods?

	Passerines	Waterbirds / Seabirds	Gamebirds	Raptors	Other
Illegal Shooting	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Illegal Trapping	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Illegal Taking	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Illegal Poisoning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

If you selected 'Other,' could you tell us what method and bird species are involved?

IKB Drivers and Motivations Survey

6. Socio Economic Profile of the Actors Directly Involved in IKB

* 1. **What are the main demographic characteristics of the individuals directly involved in IKB? (Select only the options for the actors that apply to your country). Note that you can move to the next question only when at least one row has been completed.**

	Sex	Socio Economic Status*	Age group	Area of Origin	Education Level**
Local Shooters					
National Shooters					
International Shooters					
Local Trappers					
National Trappers					
Local Takers					
National Takers					
Poison Users					
Others					

If you selected 'Other,' could you tell us who are these other actors?

* **Socioeconomic status** refers to an individual's or group's social and economic position in society, typically measured by income and occupation.
- **Low:** Low income and low-skilled jobs.
- **Medium:** Moderate income and stable jobs.
- **High:** High income jobs.

****Education level** refers to the highest level of formal education a person has completed. In this survey, the options for this category refers to:
- **None:** No formal schooling
- **Primary:** Basic education, usually covering elementary levels.
- Secondary: Middle and high school education.
- **Higher:** College, university, and advanced degrees.



2. Could you provide any socio-economic or cultural characteristics of these actors that were not requested in the previous question but may be relevant for developing their profiles? For example, whether poison users are typically farmers, or trappers are fishermen.

IKB Drivers and Motivations Survey

7. Drivers and Motivations of Directs Actors Involved in IKB

This section examines the drivers and motivations of individuals directly involved in IKB. This includes exploring the key factors that influence or enable their involvement in IKB.

1. Please rank the main motivation categories of the key actors involved in IKB in your country, where Low = 1, Medium = 2, and High = 3. You do not need to provide answers for direct actors that are not relevant to your country - (A brief description of each category is included below to help you to answer this question).*

	Experiential	Social Status	Practical	Financial Gains	Subsistence	Risk Mitigation	Cultural Practices	Social Bonding	Other
Local Shooters									
National Shooters									
International Shooters									
Local Trappers									
National Trappers									
Local Takers									
National Takers									
Poison Users									
Others									

If you selected 'Others,' could you tell us what this motivation is/are?

* 2. Building on the previous question, this section expands on each category. Please identify the two main motivations of only the direct IKB actors in your country. Please note that you may proceed only after completing at least one row per actor.

	1 st Motivation	2 nd Motivation
Local Shooters		
National Shooters		
International Shooters		
Local Trappers		
National Trappers		
Local Takers		
National Takers		
Poison Users		
Others		

If you selected 'Other,' could you tell us what these motivations are?

* 3. How do direct actors involved in IKB rationalize or justify their actions?

	Necessary for livelihood/survival	Everyone does it	Tradition/heritage	Gains outweigh risks.	Act of protest against government	Birds are seen as resources	Don't know	Other
Local Shooters	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
National Shooters	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
International Shooters	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Local Trappers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
National Trappers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Local Takers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
National takers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Poison Users	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other Actors	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

If you selected other justifications, please specify which ones

* 4. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statements below, which describe the main social and cultural factors that may create opportunities for or facilitate IKB in your country.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not enough evidence
Participation in IKB brings social rewards such as pride, recognition, or status.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Community members feel comfortable reporting IKB activities to authorities.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
It is easy to access guns, traps, poison, or other tools used in IKB.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Individuals involved in IKB acquire their skills and knowledge from immediate family members and/or close friends.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Cultural traditions in the community support the act of IKB.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
In general, men are more tolerant of IKB than women.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
International market is a key factor driving IKB.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Participation in IKB is driven by poverty or limited economic opportunities.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Limited enforcement is an important factor allowing IKB to occur.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Community/local leaders participate in IKB activities.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Please let us know if there are any other factors that enable or facilitate IKB which we might have overlooked but are important to consider.

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IKB Drivers and Motivations Survey

8. Demand and Market Dynamics of IKB

In this section, we look at the demand side of IKB in order to understand the frequency and the main destination of the birds and/or eggs illegally killed, trapped or taken in your country

* 1. How common is the consumption/use of birds illegally killed, trapped or taken in your country?

- ◯ Yes, they are commonly consumed/used.
- ◯ Yes, but only in some regions.
- ◯ Rarely, it is not a common practice.
- ◯ No, they are not consumed at all.
- ◯ Not sure / Not enough evidence
- ◯ Other (please specify)

* 2. Can you identify the main ways in which most consumers or users obtain illegally killed or captured birds or eggs, depending on the final purpose for which they are killed or taken?

	Food	CageBird/Pets	Falconry	Bird Singing	Others
Local market (consumed, kept, or used within the locality)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Purchased or obtained directly from the person who caught, killed or took illegally the bird or eggs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Urban markets (consumed, kept, or used within urban areas of the country)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
International market (exported or trafficked abroad)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Not sure/not enough information	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

If you selected “Other,” please specify the bird species, its use, and where it is obtained.

IKB Drivers and Motivations Survey

9. Socio Economic Profile of the Actors Indirectly Involved in IKB

In this section, we examine the socio-economic attributes of the indirect actors. These are people who use, consume, or trade birds obtained through IKB, even though they are not directly involved in the act itself. Their motivations include various purposes, such as taxidermy, food, pets, singing competitions, trade, economic gains, among others.
In this survey, these actors include:

- **Local Consumer: Buys or uses illegally caught or killed birds or eggs within their local community.**
- **National Consumer: Buys or uses illegally caught or killed birds or eggs from diverse regions within a country.**
- **International Consumer: Buys or uses birds or eggs that were killed or caught in countries other than their own.**
  Examples include when individuals acquire birds that have been imported through international markets, or when visitors purchase killed or trapped birds in the country they visit.
- **Subsistence Traders: Individuals doing small-scale trade of illegally caught or killed birds or eggs mainly for survival, little surplus, or low profit motive.**
- **Commercial Traders: individuals doing large-scale trade of illegally caught or killed birds or eggs for wider markets, and obtain higher revenues.**

* 1. For each group of indirect actors, please select the socio-economic attributes that best describe them. Only select the indirect actors that are applicable to your country. Note that you can move to the next question only when at least one row per actor has been completed.

	Sex	Age	Area of Origin	Socio Economic Status
Local Consumer/User				
National Consumer/User				
International Consumer/User				
Subsistence Traders				
Commercial Traders				
Others				

If you select "others", please specify who they are and provide a bit of information about them.

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2. Which bird characteristics and other factors do you perceive are the most influential in the consumption/use/trade of illegally caught or killed birds and eggs? (Please select just the options that apply for your country)

	*Birds Physical traits	Wild Origin/Rarity	Revenue Potential	Easy Access	Luxury Good/Delicacy	High Market Price	Other
Local Consumer/User	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
National Consumer/User	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
International Consumer/User	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Subsistence Traders	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Commercial Traders	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

If you select “Other” actors or factors, could you please specify which ones they are?

*Birds’ physical traits refer to features such as bright colours or singing ability, that make them targets for illegal killing or capture.

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IKB Drivers and Motivations Survey

10. Barriers, Challenges and Opportunities to Address IKB

In this section, we explore the main barriers, challenges, and opportunities related to effectively addressing IKB at governmental and social level. The aim is to understand what is preventing more effective action and how these obstacles can be overcome. We will also examine the key opportunities that could support efforts to reduce or eliminate IKB.

* 1. Based on your experience, can you please consider the extent to which do you agree or disagree with each statement?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Government work plans are dictated by the scale and urgency of IKB in the country.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Departments with overlapping responsibilities are poorly coordinated, and leadership on IKB is unclear.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Government staff have the technical skills and resources required to deal with IKB challenges.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Policy, including Actions Plans, are rarely implemented because the government does not consider IKB a serious problem.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
There is sufficient ecological and biological data for addressing IKB effectively.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
There is sufficient social, economic, and cultural data on the actors, causes, drivers, and motivations to understand and address IKB effectively.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
International political pressure is effective in motivating governments to take action against IKB.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Compared to previous years, government measures to address IKB have become more effective.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 2. Based on your experience, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each statement?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Consumers' knowledge that birds are illegally killed, trapped or taken reduces consumption.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
General public sees IKB as a serious problem that should be addressed.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Hunters' associations and IKB-benefiting groups resist the introduction of policies, and when policies exist, their lobbying reduces the effectiveness of implementation.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Greater effort should be directed towards education and awareness-raising among younger generations to reduce IKB.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Greater effort should be directed towards influencing and changing the behaviour of individuals engaged in IKB.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
The scale of IKB makes enforcement insufficient as the main response strategy.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Birds are seen as resources to be taken by the general public.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Younger generations are less tolerant to IKB.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Please let us know if there are any other factors that act as barriers to effectively addressing IKB, which we might have overlooked but are important to consider.

3. What would be your recommendations for governments, international bodies (e.g. CMS) and/or NGOs to address IKB more effectively?



* 4. **Which type of evidence did you primarily rely on to answer most of these questions?**

- ◯ Personal experience / observation
- ◯ Reports or scientific publications
- ◯ Official statistics or government data
- ◯ Media sources (news, social media, etc.)
- ◯ Other (please specify)

  [ ]
- ◯ None of the above

5. If available, please upload any studies on the socioeconomic profiles of IKB actors or on the drivers and motivations of IKB carried out in your country (Optional)

Choose File | Choose File | No file chosen

* 6. In certain cases, we may need to follow up for clarification or to obtain additional information. Could you please provide your name and email address? Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Name [ ]

Email [ ]

Annex 2: Description of Categories Used to Explore the Motivation Component in question 7.1 (Section 7):

Experiential: Motivations related to personal experiences or enjoyment, such as sport, hobbies, personal satisfaction, or thrill-seeking. Because this category is wide, it was divided in two types:

- **Recreational**: Motivations in which individuals engage in IKB primarily for the thrill, excitement, and personal satisfaction derived from the act itself.
- **Hobbies**: Motivations related to the use of live birds for specific hobbyist practices, including falconry, cage bird keeping, and bird singing competitions.

Social Status and Recognition: Motivations linked to prestige, such as access to culinary delicacies or luxury goods, gaining social media validation, or earning respect and recognition within a particular community.

Practical: Using illegally killed or caught birds or eggs as a practical resource, for example as food or as a cheap or healthy source of protein.

Financial Gains: Generating income, ranging from small earnings to significant profits.

Subsistence: Meeting basic survival needs that are difficult to fulfil through other strategies; for example, eating birds as a main source of protein when no other options are available.

Risk Mitigation: Controlling or preventing harm by removing predators and/or pests that may threaten livestock, crops, or property.

Cultural Practices: Motivations tied to cultural traditions, religious beliefs, or spiritual practices.

Social Bonding: Motivations related to building or maintaining relationships, such as giving wildlife as gifts to friends or influential people or strengthening family and community ties.

Annex 3: Categories Used to Explore the First and Second Motivation, in question 7.2 (Section 7), of the survey.

2. Taxidermy
3. Cage Birds
4. Personal Satisfaction
5. Thrill Seeking
6. Bird Singing
7. Falconry
8. Culinary Delicacies
9. Luxury Goods
10. Social Media Validation
11. Social Recognition
12. Food
13. Cheap Protein
14. Healthy Protein
15. Small Earnings
16. Commercial Profits
17. Survival Needs
18. Predator Control
19. Pest Control
20. Cultural Traditions

21. Religious Beliefs
22. Spiritual Practices
23. Gifts

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What is CMS?

The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) is a legally binding international treaty under the United Nations. CMS is one of the most important global frameworks for wildlife conservation and plays a vital role in addressing the global biodiversity crisis. By fostering international collaboration, supporting research, and developing conservation agreements and actions among the Range States in which these species are found, CMS ensures the long-term survival of migratory species of wild animals and their habitats, and the vital benefits they provide.

CHAMPION PLUS

The European Union was recognized as Champion Plus for their generous support and commitment towards addressing Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean for the period 2015 - 2028.