Green Courts and Environmental Justice in Romania: Lessons from Comparative Environmental Adjudication

In an era marked by a triple planetary crisis – climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution – national judicial systems play a role in enforcing environmental legislation and guaranteeing the right to a healthy environment. Against this backdrop, the present study examines the appropriateness and modalities for establishing specialized jurisdictional structures in environmental law, commonly referred to as "green courts" or Environmental Courts and Tribunals (ECTs). The analysis of the national legislative framework, official reports, and the pressures exerted by European Union (EU) and international environmental law identifies concerns about the response capacity of the justice system. Based on a comparative assessment of selected models (Sweden, New South Wales and China) and of Romania's institutional framework, the paper argues that, at this stage, the pragmatic solution does not necessarily lie in creating separate environmental courts, but rather in the establishment of specialized panels within existing courts, coupled with a reform of expert-evidence mechanisms and intensive professional training for members of the judiciary.

Keywords: *environmental courts; environmental justice in Romania; environmental crime; judicial specialization; access to justice*.

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Introduction

In the context of global ecological challenges, the institutional architecture of environmental adjudication has received attention in the literature. Although often presented as having a recent evolution, judicial mechanisms specialized in environmental issues benefit from a substantial theoretical and practical tradition. Since the late twentieth century, through initiatives such as the establishment of the Land and Environment Court in New South Wales in 1980 or debates on a specialized federal system in the United States, the foundations of these institutions have been analysed in the literature. By 2021, the phenomenon had acquired a global dimension, with 2,115 such institutions documented in 67 countries in the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) inventory published in 2022, reflecting a transition from isolated experiments to a consolidated jurisdictional practice. The reports of UNEP and contemporary monographs and specialist studies identify substantial structural diversity. From administrative bodies with quasi-judicial powers to specialised tribunals integrated into general court systems, these entities are defined by their mandate to resolve complex environmental disputes.[1]

[1]United Nations Environment Programme (2022). For an overview, see Angstadt & Schink (2023).

The global expansion of these environmental courts has generated a doctrinal debate about their definition and classification. Attempts to formulate a single definition, which would serve as a rigorous tool for analysis, often run into structural heterogeneity.

Some authors approach these entities in a broad sense, defining them as governmental, judicial or administrative bodies vested with the authority to resolve complex disputes relating to the environment, natural resources and territorial planning. This functional approach emphasizes the role of the institution rather than its organizational form. On the other hand, recent research emphasizes the qualitative attributes of these institutions. Instead of a universal definition, these authors propose the analysis of key parameters, such as jurisdictional extent (limits and specific powers of intervention) and normative contribution (active role in the formation and evolution of environmental law, especially in common law systems).[2]

This duality between the attempt at unitary definition and the recognition of de facto diversity underlines the fact that environmental courts are not a monolithic institutional model, but a dynamic adaptation of legal systems to the specifics of local ecological challenges.

The research question is which form of environmental judicial specialization is appropriate for Romania. The article addresses civil, administrative and criminal environmental adjudication, with particular attention to criminal enforcement capacity. The comparison examines how jurisdiction, scientific expertise and institutional capacity affect the choice between a separate court and specialization within existing courts. Following this introduction, the article reviews the literature and explains the methodology, compares the selected models, examines the Romanian framework and its vulnerabilities, and develops reform proposals before presenting the conclusions.

Literature Review

The literature approaches ECTs through both organizational and functional analysis. Pring and Pring's guide distinguishes the institutional arrangements through which environmental disputes are resolved. Preston identifies characteristics associated with successful ECTs, including independence, expertise and procedures adapted to environmental litigation. Warnock examines powers, integrity and legitimacy, connecting specialization with the judicial role. S. Murari examines the conditions under which courts may grant relief to prevent environmental harm, including interim relief. Together, these contributions indicate why the formal creation of a specialist body and the quality of its adjudication require separate examination.[3]

Comparative research also qualifies the case for institutional transplantation. Wang's analysis of Sweden and China identifies differences in

[2]Pring & Pring (2016). Warnock (2020).

[3]Pring & Pring (2016); Preston (2014); Warnock (2020); S. Murari (2021).

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legal foundations and procedural design, despite the importance of scientific expertise in both settings. These differences are relevant to Romania because technical participation, organizational autonomy and jurisdictional concentration are distinct choices. A foreign institution may provide a useful example of one function without supplying an organizational model that can be reproduced in full.[4]

Recent empirical research examines more specific interventions. Xiong and co-authors use a difference-in-differences approach to study the relationship between China's environmental public interest litigation pilot and corporate greenwashing. Their findings concern a defined reform and corporate population. They do not establish that creating specialized panels in Romania would necessarily produce equivalent effects, or that all specialist courts are effective. For the present study, this distinction supports a comparison of legal and institutional arrangements without treating case totals as evidence of improved environmental outcomes.[5]

Romanian scholarship provides a further point of departure. Duminică's earlier analysis of normative inflation addresses legislative fragmentation and discusses specialized jurisdictions among possible responses. Ștefan examines climate change from an administrative law perspective. The present article develops the institutional question by considering which form of specialization is compatible with Romania's judicial organization and how expertise could be strengthened within existing courts. It therefore connects the domestic implementation problem with selected comparative arrangements.[6]

Methodology

The study combines doctrinal legal analysis with a functional comparison of Sweden, New South Wales and China. The selection is purposive rather than representative: Sweden illustrates technical participation within the general court system; New South Wales illustrates a specialist court exercising several statutory jurisdictions; and China illustrates extensive institutional specialization and public interest litigation. The comparison examines institutional position, jurisdiction, scientific expertise and procedural access. Its purpose is to identify functions potentially relevant to Romania, rather than to rank the selected systems.

Emergence and Evolution of Environmental Courts and Tribunals (ECTs). Brief Overview of Selected Models

In order to substantiate a public policy proposal in Romania, it is imperative to examine international experiences, identifying mechanisms that may inform reform and the pitfalls to be avoided.

[4]Wang (2016).
[5]Preston (2014); Warnock (2020); Wang (2016); Xiong et al. (2025).
[6]Duminică (2024); Ștefan (2023).

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The concept of "green court" is a tangible institutional reality in the architecture of the contemporary rule of law. According to studies by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the number of these specialized judicial fora has increased substantially. The UNEP ECT guide published in 2016 showed an "explosion" of new ECTs around the world, from over 350 identified in 2009, to over 1,200 in 2016. In the guide describing 2021, published in 2022, 2,115 ECTs were identified globally. This proliferation is not accidental, but represents an institutional response to the inherent complexity of environmental litigation, which requires an integrated, multidisciplinary approach capable of harmonizing legal rigor with scientific uncertainty.[7]

The fundamental justification for the existence of ECTs lies in the recognition that non-specialised courts may face difficulties in handling environmental cases. These difficulties include the lack of technical expertise of judges, the jurisdictional fragmentation between civil, criminal and administrative jurisdictions, the prohibitive costs of expertise and the excessive duration of proceedings, which may make a remedy too late to prevent irreversible environmental damage. ECTs are designed to provide efficiency, visibility, expertise, and access to justice for citizens and non-governmental organisations, in the spirit of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration and the Aarhus Convention. Thus, the conceptual framework defined by UNEP emphasizes three fundamental rights — access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice - which form the foundation of the rule of law in the field of environment. In this context, environmental courts are not only dispute resolution forums, they become pillars of sustainable development and intergenerational equity.[8]

The UNEP guide for 2021, published in 2022, provides a detailed overview of how 67 countries have chosen to configure their justice systems to meet environmental challenges. Institutional models vary considerably, reflecting the diversity of legal traditions and national political priorities. However, starting from the UNEP guide we identify a main typology of these courts, which could represent a source of inspiration for the Romanian legislator:[9]

a. Operationally independent environmental courts (separate, fully or largely independent environmental courts): independent structures integrated into the judicial power, having jurisdiction over the environmental matters assigned to them by statute (for example, the Land and Environment Court of New South Wales, Australia).

b. Decisionally independent environmental courts: there are environmental courts which are part of the general court system, but nevertheless have substantial independence in terms of their procedures, rules and decisional freedom. The UNEP 2016 ECT Guide referred to two environmental courts as good examples of this model: the Planning and Environment Court in

[7]United Nations Environment Programme (2022).
[8]Preston (2014).
[9]United Nations Environment Programme (2022).

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Queensland, Australia, and the Environmental Division of the Vermont Superior Court in the United States of America (Pring & Pring 2016).

c. Mix of law-trained and science-trained judges – multidisciplinary decision-making. A number of environmental courts (and environmental tribunals) have both law-trained judges and scientific or technically trained judges deciding cases together on an equal footing. The Land and Environment Courts in Sweden are an example of a decisionally independent environmental court with a multidisciplinary judicial approach.

d. General court judges assigned environmental cases (assigned environmental cases in addition to their regular docket, sometimes without necessary interest, expertise or training).

e. General court judges trained in environmental law (who may therefore be assigned environmental law cases from time to time).

The UNEP 2016 ECT Guide also identified three different types of environmental tribunals: a. operationally independent environmental tribunal (separate, fully or largely independent environmental tribunal); b. decisionally independent environmental tribunal (under a government agency's supervision, but not that whose decisions they review); c. captive environmental tribunal (within the control of the agency whose decisions they review). These categories overlap: institutional location, technical membership and judicial training are separate dimensions of specialization.[10]

The analysis of these systems suggests that the success of these courts depends not only on the chosen model, but on a series of functional characteristics, such as independence from political and economic pressures, a clearly defined jurisdiction that may encompass civil, administrative and criminal matters within one institution, under their respective procedures, access to impartial internal or external scientific expertise and flexible procedures adapted to the urgency of environmental cases. For example, models from Sweden, Australia and China reveal deeply different structural approaches, influenced by the ecological emergencies specific to each region, but also by national legal traditions.[11]

Sweden holds a pioneering position in the history of specialized courts, with systems for adjudicating water and land disputes that predate the global environmental awareness of the 1970s. The contemporary Swedish model, based on the 1998 Environmental Code and significantly reformed in 2011, represents a hybrid system in which legal and scientific expertise contribute to deliberation. Five regional Land and Environment Courts operate within district courts, with an appeal court at Svea Court of Appeal; the model is therefore part of the general court system.[12]

A notable feature of the Swedish model is the use of technical judges who have voting power equal to that of legally trained judges. A regional-level panel of judges typically consists of a presiding judge (jurist), an

[10]Pring & Pring (2016), chapter 3.
[11]Preston (2014).
[12]United Nations Environment Programme (2022). Swedish National Courts Administration (n.d.), The Mission and Role of the Swedish Courts.

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environmental technical expert, and two lay members who possess expertise in industrial or public management areas. Technical judges are permanent employees of the court, which supports continuity and access to institutional expertise. Their technical qualifications and professional experience support the assessment of scientific evidence. This multidisciplinary composition allows the court to "ask the right questions" during hearings and critically evaluate the technical reports submitted by the parties, helping to clarify disagreements between experts without removing scientific uncertainty.[13]

Australia provides an example of specialization in a common law system. The Land and Environment Court of New South Wales, established in 1980, is internationally recognized as the world's first specialist environmental superior court, within the state judicial system. It functions as a "one-stop shop" for the land and environmental matters assigned to it by statute in the State of New South Wales. Its status as a superior court of record must be distinguished from the scope of its statutory jurisdiction. The court is organized into eight classes of jurisdiction, covering everything from appeals on land assessment and urban planning, to civil pollution cases and serious environmental crimes. The court's adjudicative personnel reflect a mix of legal expertise and practical technical competence. Judicial appointments are subject to the applicable statutory requirements. Commissioners, who are experts in urban planning, architecture, engineering or environmental sciences, work alongside them.[14]

Unlike Sweden, where technical members participate in the applicable collegiate formations, in Australia commissioners often have roles as mediators or lead conciliation phases. They can also determine specified types of administrative appeals. This distinction allows the court to handle the high workload through functions assigned to judges and commissioners by statute. The Land and Environment Court of New South Wales has jurisdiction to hear civil, administrative and criminal cases. By concentrating these statutory competences within one institution, the Australian model thus achieves the UNEP ideal of "comprehensive jurisdiction". This concentration may support consistency, but does not merge every consequence of an incident into a single proceeding.[15]

As for China, it has undertaken an extensive reform of the environmental justice system in modern history. From a few pilot courts in the 2000s, the country had developed by 2024 a network of 2,424 environmental and resource tribunals, integrated into the system of People's Courts. This transformation is not just an administrative exercise, but a central component of state policy to build an "ecological civilization" that aims to balance rapid economic development with sustainability.[16]

[13]Wang (2016); Pring & Pring (2016), chapter 3.
[14]United Nations Environment Programme (2022). Land and Environment Court Act 1979 (New South Wales), Parts 2–3. Land and Environment Court of New South Wales (2024), Purpose and Jurisdiction.
[15]Land and Environment Court Act 1979 (New South Wales), Parts 2–3.
[16]Supreme People's Court of the People's Republic of China (2025).

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A major innovation, reported as good practice in the UNEP guide, is the transition to jurisdictional arrangements that cross provincial administrative boundaries in favour of natural ecosystems. By creating dedicated courts for the Yangtze and Huanghe river basins, China is trying to combat local protectionism — the tendency of authorities in a region to ignore pollution caused by companies that are big local tax payers. China has adopted an integrated institutional model, known as the "three-in-one" (tribunal integration). In this system, a single environmental division has the power to hear civil, administrative and criminal environmental matters under their respective procedures. This approach seeks to reduce institutional fragmentation without merging the applicable procedures or forms of liability.[17]

Specialist panels include professional judges working in environmental law. However, in specified public interest and environmentally significant cases, a panel of seven members is used: three professional judges and four "people's assessors". These assessors are representatives of the public who may have technical training and who participate in fact-finding; in a seven-member panel, they may comment on the application of law but do not vote on it. The Chinese system also uses "expert pools" to provide access to scientific knowledge. Judges can draw specialists from these lists to provide neutral technical advice.[18]

Another peculiarity of the Chinese system is that in the case of public interest trials, prosecutors have become important actors. Public interest litigation provides a route for procuratorates to seek civil remedies for environmental harm, alongside their criminal prosecution functions.[19]

In 2024, Chinese courts completed more than 219,000 first-instance environmental cases, of which 4,168 were public interest environmental lawsuits. These official figures describe judicial activity. Xiong and co-authors examine the relationship between the environmental public interest litigation pilot and corporate greenwashing; their study does not establish a general deterrent effect of specialist courts or online broadcasting.[20]

Environmental Justice in Romania. The Current Situation

The need to reform environmental justice in Romania must be assessed against national enforcement needs as well as international experience.

Romania's legislative framework in the field of environmental protection is intricate and shaped to a large extent by the obligations arising from its status as a Member State of the European Union. The cornerstone of the national legislation is Government Emergency Ordinance No. 195/2005, which

[17]United Nations Environment Programme (2022).

[18]United Nations Environment Programme (2022). People's Assessors Law of the People's Republic of China (2018), Articles 16 and 22; Zhang (2023), chapter 3.

[19]Zhang (2023), chapter 8.

[20]Supreme People's Court of the People's Republic of China (2025). Xiong et al. (2025).

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constitutes a framework law establishing general principles, institutions, and procedures.

Romania's legislative framework in this field is extensively shaped by the environmental acquis; this does not, by itself, establish complete compliance or effective implementation.

The constitutional recognition of the fundamental right to a healthy and ecologically balanced environment was achieved through the 2003 constitutional revision, which introduced Article 35, entitled "The Right to a healthy environment". Article 5 of Government Emergency Ordinance No. 195/2005 recognizes every person's right to a healthy and ecologically balanced environment and lists the following guarantees: a) access to information about the environment, subject to the confidentiality requirements of the applicable legislation; b) the right of association in organizations for environmental protection; c) the right to be consulted in the process of decision-making regarding the development of environmental policy and legislation, the issuance of regulatory instruments in this area and the drafting of plans and programs; d) the right to address administrative and/or judicial authorities, directly or through advocacy organizations, in respect of environmental issues, whether or not there has been damage; e) the right to compensation for the damage suffered. These guarantees are exercised in accordance with the applicable procedural rules.[21]

The main institution with responsibilities in environmental policy is the Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests. Its functions include policy coordination, regulation, monitoring, inspection and control, exercised directly or through the competent specialized bodies and public institutions.

The institutional framework includes the National Environmental Guard and bodies exercising environmental permitting, protected-area, forestry and water-management responsibilities. Their administrative functions must be distinguished from the adjudicative functions of courts.

But the rule of law in the environmental context is not merely the availability of a corpus of law. Its substance is the predictability and intelligibility of the law, and the assurance of its regular application by the courts. There are no specialized environmental courts in Romania, but the general courts of law (district courts, tribunals, courts of appeal and the High Court of Cassation and Justice) resolve environmental disputes. Although case-law is developing regarding the application of the Aarhus Convention, EU law and general principles of environmental law, there remain gaps between formal regulations and their effective application.

Failure to respond effectively to pollution, illegal logging or illegal dumping can undermine the public's trust in the judiciary and in the State's capacity to enforce its function. The gap between the de jure normative framework and its practical implementation, identified as a concern in the European Commission's reporting, can weaken the protection of environmental

[21]Constitution of Romania, Article 35; Government Emergency Ordinance No. 195/2005, Article 5.

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rights. Effective environmental enforcement is therefore relevant to both sectoral policy and the rule of law.

The European Commission's 2025 Environmental Implementation Review for Romania identifies continuing concerns about the capacity of the judiciary to deal effectively with environmental cases. It notes that limited public information about investigations and prosecutions makes it difficult to assess the authorities' response to specific infringements. The report also records existing cooperation protocols while questioning their practical operation. In the same report, Romania is placed joint third among Member States in terms of the total number of environmental complaints. Between 15 May 2022 and 31 December 2024, the Commission received 71 complaints, a significant part of which relates to waste and nature, followed by water, air quality and environmental impact assessment issues.[22]

Official national statistics show that efforts are being made in the fight against environmental crime. In its 2025 Activity Report, published in 2026, the National Environmental Guard records 39,121 inspections and 190 criminal referrals. These figures concern enforcement activity, rather than convictions or the environmental effects of judicial decisions.[23] On the other hand, reports from non-governmental organizations offer a different perspective. A Greenpeace report published in 2018, for example, indicated an average of 34 detected cases of illegal logging every day in 2017.[24] These historical figures concern a different period and measure and cannot be compared directly with the Guard's annual totals.

All this indicates that environmental justice in Romania faces a number of significant challenges, with the effectiveness of environmental law enforcement dependent on institutional capacity.

Vulnerabilities of Environmental Justice in Romania

In the field of environment, judicial capacity depends in part on whether human and material resources are sufficient to address the complexity and scale of environmental problems at national level.

One of the major issues concerns the effectiveness of inter-institutional cooperation. To combat environmental crime effectively requires ongoing cooperation among the National Environmental Guard, the Romanian Police and the Prosecutor's Office. The European Commission records existing cooperation protocols but questions their practical operation. Their effectiveness should therefore be assessed in terms of information exchange, the preservation of evidence and timely access to expertise.

Another structural obstacle to effective environmental justice in Romania is the need for further specialization among judges and prosecutors. Law No. 303/2022 on the status of judges and prosecutors requires participation in

[22]European Commission (2025), Environmental Implementation Review: Romania, pp. 55–56.
[23]Garda Națională de Mediu (2026), p. 2.
[24]Greenpeace Romania (2018). The figures concern cases detected in 2017.

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continuing professional training at least once every three years under Article 83(1). Article 83(5) of the Law provides that "continuous professional training of judges and prosecutors is carried out taking into account the need for their specialization". These training provisions do not themselves establish panels or prosecution structures dedicated exclusively or primarily to environmental cases. Specialized sections and panels are governed separately by Article 45 of Law No. 304/2022. [25]

Directive (EU) 2024/1203 also addresses institutional capacity in environmental criminal law. Article 17 requires adequate resources and an assessment of the need for greater specialization in light of national constitutional and legal arrangements. Articles 18 and 19 address specialized training and coordination. These provisions support investment across the enforcement chain, but do not prescribe a separate environmental court or replace the rules governing civil and administrative proceedings.[26]

Training is necessary in the field because environmental disputes often involve technical complexity and an interplay among law, science, and politics. Judges should be trained and have expertise in the field. Without such expertise, the environmental implications of a dispute may receive insufficient attention. A judge or prosecutor, no matter how well-versed in the law, could find it hard to evaluate the relevance and significance of sophisticated scientific evidence, e.g., chemical analysis of pollutants, ecological impact surveys, atmospheric pollutant dispersion models, which require careful judicial assessment.[27]

Secondly, environmental law has its own legal complexity. It is a mixed, globalizing, highly dynamic and detailed branch of law, at the intersection of administrative law, civil law, criminal law, international law, and European Union law. Effective "navigation" in this complex normative landscape requires in-depth and constantly updated knowledge. The European experience, through the existence of networks such as the European Union Forum of Judges for the Environment, the European Network of Prosecutors for the Environment, the European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law and EnviCrimeNet, underlines the importance of continuous training in the field, dialogue, and exchange of best practices between specialized magistrates to meet these challenges.[28]

Last but not least, the effectiveness of environmental justice may be affected by corruption and political influence, against which safeguards are required throughout the justice system. While noting progress in some areas, the European Commission's 2025 report on the rule of law identifies broader institutional challenges; these findings do not by themselves establish interference in particular environmental cases.[29]

[25]Law No. 303/2022, Article 83(1), (4)–(5); Law No. 304/2022, Article 45.
[26]Directive (EU) 2024/1203, Articles 17–19 and recital 61.
[27]Preston (2014).
[28]European Union Forum of Judges for the Environment (n.d.). European Network of Prosecutors for the Environment (n.d.). European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law (n.d.). EnviCrimeNet (n.d.).
[29]European Commission (2025), 2025 Rule of Law Report: Country Chapter on Romania.

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Combating environmental crime requires institutional independence as well as technical and legal capacity. On this basis, strengthening institutional capacity and cooperation, establishing a national specialization programme in environmental law for judges, and ensuring transparency and civil society participation are among the strategic measures to support effective environmental justice in Romania.

The Way Forward: Reform Scenarios and Recommendations

Given the financial and human resources constraints, the establishment in Romania of separate specialized environmental courts, drawing on the New South Wales model, would require substantial legislative and organizational measures in the short term. In this context, the pragmatic scenario is that of setting up specialized environmental panels within ordinary courts. This is a feasible option, with potential benefits for judicial effectiveness. There could be corresponding panels in the criminal, civil and administrative litigation sections, made up of judges who have undergone specific training modules. Potentially lower infrastructure costs (existing rooms and staff are used), flexibility (the number of panels may vary depending on the volume), speed in implementation are some of the advantages of following this path. The existence of panels specializing in public procurement or labour disputes provides an organizational precedent for the model. Their organization would follow Article 45 of Law No. 304/2022, without altering the statutory allocation of jurisdiction or appeal routes.[30]

Specialization should preserve practical access to justice. Concentrating a small caseload in a distant forum could increase costs or create delays where trained judges are unavailable. The proposed panels should therefore be introduced where case volumes and staffing justify them, with replacement arrangements and access to independent experts. Scientific opinions should disclose their methods and uncertainties and remain open to challenge by the parties. These conditions would allow the anticipated benefits of specialization to be assessed without assuming that organizational change alone improves environmental protection.[31]

Another equally important aspect is the investment in human capital because the creation of such panels would have limited value without continuing training in the field. The introduction of Environmental Law and elements of Environmental Science (Ecology, Forestry) as mandatory modules, not optional, in the continuing professional training of judges and prosecutors and the organization of joint sessions with technical experts, prosecutors and police officers to understand the complete evidentiary chain are essential elements to start a real reform of environmental justice in Romania. This

[30]Constitution of Romania, Article 126(2), (5); Law No. 304/2022, Articles 39(2), 40(3) and 45(1)–(3); Law No. 101/2016, Article 49(2).

[31]Aarhus Convention, Article 9(4)–(5); Preston (2014).

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proposal should be implemented through the statutory framework for approving professional training programmes.

Last but not least, it should not be neglected that environmental justice does not begin in the courtroom; therefore it is also necessary to specialize prosecutors and strengthen the capacity of the Romanian police to handle technically complex cases, through close collaboration with the National Environmental Guard and the Forest Guard, and to equip them with specific investigative equipment.

Conclusions

Romania can no longer afford the luxury of treating the environment as collateral damage to economic development or as a minor administrative problem. The reports examined identify concerns about the capacity of the justice system to respond effectively to environmental offences.

The comparison distinguishes institutional form from the functions of specialization. Sweden illustrates the integration of technical expertise, New South Wales the concentration of statutory jurisdictions, and China the expansion of specialized environmental adjudication. For Romania, these experiences support developing expertise within existing jurisdictions rather than directly transplanting a foreign model. Implementation should reflect case volumes, staffing and access to scientific evidence. Its effects on adjudication and the implementation of remedies should be evaluated, since specialization alone does not guarantee better environmental outcomes.

Although the model of separate specialized environmental courts (New South Wales type) remains a long-term desideratum, a pragmatic way forward for Romania is to specialize within the existing system. The establishment of specialized panels, supported by intensive professional training of magistrates and a coordinated approach to investigation and prosecution, could improve the handling of environmental cases and support the implementation of European standards and the protection of citizens' rights.

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