



EUTR News – April to June 2019

This issue of the EUTR News provides an update on the operation of the EU's law to address illegal logging, the EU Timber Regulation (EUTR), from April to June 2019. As with all of our previous editions, this issue will include information on what both the European Commission and EU Member States are doing to ensure the proper application of the EUTR, and provide updates on similar legislation internationally.

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1. European Commission support to implementation and enforcement of the EUTR

The Council of the EU adopted new rules on reporting obligations in environmental legislation. The European Commission hosted the 23rd and 24th Expert Group Meetings on the EUTR and FLEGT Regulation and published a summary of their public consultation on stepping up action against deforestation.

New EU rules on reporting obligations in environmental legislation

The Council of the EU adopted amendments that will apply to 10 pieces of environmental legislation, including the EUTR, FLEGT regulation and CITES regulation. The amendments are aimed at simplifying reporting, increasing transparency, and enhancing databases for future evaluations. [The text of the Regulation is accessible on Council's website.](#)

European Commission public consultation on plans to 'step up action against deforestation' summary published

The European Commission released a [summary of their public consultation for a new EU Communication on 'Stepping up EU Action against Deforestation and Forest Degradation'](#). The consultation received 955 responses that almost unanimously (94%) claimed that the role of forests is indispensable and 98% of them considered that the problem of deforestation is alarming (82%) or serious (16%). The majority of stakeholders (73%) perceive the current EU framework for tackling deforestation and forest degradation as inadequate. Respondents selected palm oil (80%), meat (54%), bio-diesel (45%) and wood (35%) as the forest-risk commodities that should be addressed by an EU initiative.

European Commission FLEGT Regulation report for 2017

In June 2019 the European Commission published the [Annual Synthesis Report](#) on the implementation of the FLEGT licensing scheme for 2017. During that year, 28,826 licenses were received by Member States, of which over 98% (over 658 million kg of timber and timber products) were approved. In the report, it is underlined that some challenges remain. It is still necessary to ensure consistent reporting of data on FLEGT licences and customs declarations. The European Commission also identified a problem of restricted access of Member States to data on SILK, the Indonesian Timber Legality Information System.

European Commission overview of Competent Authority checks

The European Commission published an overview of Competent Authorities' checks and enforcement actions taken over the period of [July-December 2018](#). The report is based on data provided by Competent Authorities and compiled by United Nations Environment Programme's World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC).

European Commission guidance document on 'conflict timber'

The European Commission published a guidance document for the EUTR on ['Consideration of prevalence of armed conflict and sanctions in due diligence systems'](#). The document defines notions of 'prevalence of armed conflict' and 'sanctions' and specifies factors that should be taken into consideration in risk assessment procedures.

UNEP-WCMC briefing note on EUTR implementation

UNEP-WCMC, contracted by the European Commission, published a briefing note on developments in the implementation and enforcement of the EUTR covering the period from [March-April 2019](#).

European Commission held 23rd and 24th FLEGT/EUTR Expert Group meeting

The European Commission Expert Group on the EUTR and FLEGT Regulation held their [23rd meeting in Brussels on 30 April 2019](#), and [24th on 21 June 2019](#) bringing together representatives from Member States (plus Norway) and the Commission.

The agenda of the 23rd meeting included discussions on risk assessment regarding timber imports from Myanmar, the [draft guidance document on 'conflict timber'](#) and Slovakia's EUTR implementing legislation.

The agenda of the 24th meeting included a presentation of the [FLEGT Annual Synthesis Report](#) and on Swiss draft legislation regarding wood and wood products to be placed on the Swiss market.

The minutes of the meetings [will be soon accessible online](#).

2. Member State enforcement of the EUTR

Holzindustrie Schweighofer passed its 16th check on EUTR compliance performed by the Romanian Competent Authority. In Belgium a company named in the Global Witness report on 'Blood Timber' has been fined 12,000 EUR for infringing the EUTR requirement to perform due diligence.

Positive result of an EUTR inspection of Holzindustrie Schweighofer in Romania

Holzindustrie Schweighofer, one of the biggest timber processing companies in Europe, stated that it passed its 16th check on compliance with the EUTR, performed by the Romanian Competent Authority in Sebes sawmill. In its [press release](#), Holzindustrie Schweighofer presented a list of measures that they have adopted in order to ensure a sustainable and secure wood supply chain in Romania. These include a GPS-tracking system, a 'Zero Timber from National Parks' policy, strict controls for sensitive forest areas, afforestation projects and compliance training for Romanian employees.

The Belgian Competent Authority fined an operator named in a Global Witness report

A company that was named in the [Global Witness report 'Blood Timber'](#) has been fined 12,000 EUR by the Belgian Competent Authority for [infringing the EUTR obligation to perform due diligence](#). The report revealed serious irregularities related to timber trade with the Central African Republic during the civil war. [Global Witness highlighted](#) that it would be the first fine in Belgium since EUTR came into force.

3. Other EU and international updates

In the EU and internationally, several organisations and institutions have been working to address the problem of illegal logging. In July, Chatham House hosted the 29th Global Forum on Forest Governance. More than 20 NGOs issued a report on deforestation in Brazil after the election of Jair Bolsonaro as President.

New penalties for forest crimes in Myanmar

In its newsletter, the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO) reported about [amendments to Myanmar's forest law](#), adopted by the parliament in September 2018. The new penalties are applicable to forest officials who accept bribes or are involved in the extraction, transfer or possession of illegally harvested logs. Penalties of up to 15 years imprisonment are predicted for the most severe forest crimes. Additionally, the fines for minor offences have been raised significantly.

Chatham House meeting in July

The [29th Global Forum on Forest Governance](#) organised by Chatham House took place on 1-2 July 2019. Discussions were held around forest sector transparency and accountability, next steps for implementing the EU-Honduras VPA, timber licensing, interactions between forest legality and deforestation initiatives and efforts to promote gender equality in forest policy processes.

NGOs call for EU action against deforestation in Brazil

More than 20 NGOs signed a report '[100 days of Bolsonaro: Ending the EU's role in the assault on the Amazon.](#)' The report shows that the election of Jair Bolsonaro as President of Brazil had a significant impact on environmental rights. According to the report, in January 2019 deforestation in the Amazon rose by 54% compared to the same period in 2018. Moreover, the report reveals an increase in violence and intimidation against Brazilian indigenous groups. For these reasons, NGOs called on the European Commission to specify how they plan to respond to challenges presented by the Bolsonaro administration.

NEPCon EUTR seminar in Berlin

NEPCon is organising a [seminar on timber laws such as the EUTR and related due diligence requirements](#), in Berlin on 29 October 2019. Participants will learn about conducting risk evaluations, selecting appropriate risk mitigation measures and evaluating due diligence performance.

4. Publications and resources

Over the past three months, many publications and resources have been released. Below is a selection of resources and publications that aim to inform stakeholders across the EU and internationally on progress and key elements related to the EUTR.

Global Witness report on timber imports to China

In April 2019, Global Witness released a [briefing about timber imports to China](#). The document reveals that 80% of China's tropical timber imports comes from 10 countries that are in the bottom quarter of all countries on measures of governance, as published by the World Bank. The report recommends that China should develop a national policy aimed at mitigating negative impacts related to sourcing raw materials, and that all timber importers in China should be obliged to carry out due diligence.

EU-FLEGT resource

The new [EU-FLEGT Facility's webpage](#) about social, economic and environmental benefits of FLEGT licensing is now also available in French, Italian and Spanish. The resource includes documents and animations to explain FLEGT-licences, and the advantages of the FLEGT licencing system.

LoggingOff platform relaunched

The [LoggingOff platform](#) has recently been re-launched. It was initially created as a platform co-managed by a group of NGOs from EU and timber-producing countries as a place for civil society to provide updates on the FLEGT process. Today, LoggingOff is a well-established space allowing civil society and smaller networks to share and exchange their views and experiences of the FLEGT process and the importance of recognising communities' land rights. LoggingOff also aims to build connections between civil society from timber producing countries, and national and EU policy makers. The site hosts a library of resources on FLEGT VPAs but also information about REDD+, community forestry, independent forest monitoring and climate change.



This publication has been funded with UK aid from the UK government. The information contained in this document is the sole responsibility of its authors and does not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.