



September 2020

EUTR Newsletter

June to August 2020

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ClientEarth

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 June to August 2020. 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.

If you have any updates to share that we could include in the next newsletter, or if you would like to receive this newsletter by email, please contact us on:

forests-contact@clientearth.org

1 European Commission's activities to support the implementation and enforcement of the EUTR

The European Commission is now entering into the next phase of its Fitness Check of the EUTR and FLEGT Regulation with the publishing of both public consultations. Additionally, this summer has seen the release of the latest UNEP-WCMC briefing and new EUTR country overviews.

European Commission publishes both public consultations on FLEGT and EUTR

On 3 September 2020, the European Commission launched simultaneously the public consultations for both regulations, as they are closely related. This public consultation is part of the wider fitness check exercise conducted by the European Commission to evaluate the functioning of both the EU Timber Regulation and the FLEGT Regulation. This consultation aims at gathering the views of the concerned public and of a wide range of relevant stakeholders to help inform the Commission on whether the EU Timber Regulation and the FLEGT Regulation are fit for purpose. The consultation is available to view [here](#) and stakeholders can participate until 26 November 2020.

European Commission publishes latest Briefing Note for Competent Authorities

In June 2020, the Commission published the [latest briefing note](#) for Competent Authorities (covering February to May 2020) produced by UNEP-WCMC. Previous editions can be found [here](#).

European Commission publishes new EU Timber Regulation country overviews

Throughout June and July, the Commission released new EU Timber Regulation country overviews for: [Belarus](#), [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), [Cameroon](#), [Malaysia](#) and [Côte d'Ivoire](#).

European Commission FLEGT/EUTR Expert Group meetings

The FLEGT/EUTR Expert Group held its 28th meeting on 16 June 2020. The [agenda](#) of the meeting included, amongst others, discussion on the Communication on 'Stepping up EU Action to Protect and Restore the World's Forests', an update on EUTR implementation and VPAs, and an update on implementation of the licensing scheme under the FLEGT Regulation. Minutes should be available soon.

The European Commission also [published the minutes of the 27th meeting](#), which took place on 19 February 2020.

European Commission study on Certification and Verification Schemes in the Forest Sector and for Wood-based Products

Back in March 2020, NEPCon was contracted by the European Commission to carry out a study entitled "Study on Certification and Verification Schemes in the Forest Sector and for Wood-based Products". The study is scheduled to run for 12 months, and one of its objectives is to 'develop and apply a framework for the evaluation of such certification and third party verification schemes including their respective strengths and weaknesses, in relation to the EUTR'.

NEPCon is expected to produce a report that will include an overview of certification and verification schemes being used in the area of forest and wood-based products and an assessment of their respective strengths and weaknesses, particularly in relation to the EUTR. NEPCon organised an

introductory webinar on this study on 18 June 2020, and launched a consultative forum which lasted until end of July. NEPCon is now compiling the results of this forum, and requesting feedback on the study methodology. More information can be found [here](#).

2 Member State enforcement of the EUTR

Romania to prosecute 166 people for illegal logging after national police operation

According to a publication in the Romanian Universul.net, in June 2020, Romanian authorities say 166 people are facing criminal charges for illegal logging in the country's forests.

According to the article (which can be read [here](#)), the police have been investigating illegal logging activities across Romania in a bid to protect the country's forests and combat widespread illegal logging. Police say they have 93 separate cases and authorities have confiscated 555 square meters of wood worth 320,000 lei, about 66,500 euros. This statement from the police came as the Senate prepares to vote on establishing a prosecution agency for illegal logging.

3 Other EU and international updates

New Chinese Forest Law

On 1 July 2020, China's newly amended forest law came into effect, marking the first revision of the law in over twenty years. The law introduces a number of significant improvements, which aim to better protect China's forest resources, promote sustainable development and contribute to the national policy of building an ecological civilisation.

The amended forest law includes a ban on buying, transporting, and/or processing illegally sourced timber, and requires processing companies to establish a data record of raw materials and products (Article 65). Read more on the new law [here](#).

EarthSight Report – 'IKEA's illegal timber problem and the flawed green label behind it'

In June 2020, EarthSight released a report following an 18 month long investigation, in which they allege that IKEA is selling beech chairs made from wood which was illegally felled in the forests of the Ukrainian Carpathians. The report describes the reliance of IKEA on the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) to certify the timber it needs. The study then dives into the alleged failures of FSC in Ukraine, and what, in EarthSight's view, should be the responsibility of IKEA, as a responsible business, to deviate from FSC if this certification is failing. The report can be found [here](#).

EIA report – 'The Croatian connection exposed'

On 28 May 2020, the Environmental Investigation Agency released a report entitled 'The Croatian connection exposed', in which it describes having uncovered European timber traders evading EU laws to place their products from Myanmar onto the market. Their report mentions lack of due diligence, as well as other potential fraudulent behaviour from certain timber importers. Access the report [here](#).

4 Publications and resources

NEPCon launches the LIFE Legal Wood Project

In cooperation with partners in Italy, France, Belgium, Germany, Spain and the Netherlands, NEPCon has launched the LIFE Legal Wood project to help address the issue of illegal logging. The project aims to address the sourcing of illegal timber in complex supply chains, while addressing burdens small businesses may face concerning the EUTR.

The LIFE Legal Wood project will work directly with European companies in timber importing industries such as furniture production, retail, packaging and timber wholesale. Businesses are invited to share their EUTR and wood sourcing experiences by participating in an anonymous [online survey](#). Read more [here](#).

Fern event – Ending imported destruction: how EU due diligence regulations could protect forests and people

On 3 July 2020, Fern hosted an online event entitled 'Ending imported destruction: how EU due diligence regulations could protect forests and people'. Panellists explored options for regulating agricultural supply chains, including drawing on experience from the EUTR, and how an overarching horizontal EU human rights regulation could complement and interact with a product-centred forest-specific regulation. More information on those discussions can be found [here](#).



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