EU/Vietnam Voluntary Partnership Agreement: forest law enforcement, governance and trade

2018/0272(NLE) - 09/10/2018 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to approve the Voluntary Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on forest law enforcement, governance and trade, on behalf of the Union.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the Council can adopt the act only if the European Parliament has approved it.

BACKGROUND: in May 2003 the Commission adopted a communication to the European Parliament and to the Council which called for measures to address illegal logging by developing voluntary partnership agreements with timber-producing countries. Council conclusions on the EU action plan were adopted in October 2003 and the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the subject on 7 July 2005.

The **action plan** on forest law enforcement, governance and trade (FLEGT), endorsed by the Council in 2003, proposes a set of measures, including support for timber-producing countries, multilateral collaboration to tackle trade in illegal timber, support for private-sector initiatives, and measures to discourage investment in activities that encourage illegal logging.

In 2005 the Council authorised the Commission to negotiate FLEGT partnership agreements with timber-producing countries. The Commission entered into negotiations with Vietnam in 2010. The Voluntary Partnership Agreement between the EU and Vietnam, signed subject to its conclusion at a later date, must now be approved.

CONTENT: the draft Council decision aims to approve **the Voluntary Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on forest law enforcement, governance and trade,** on behalf of the Union.

The objective of the Agreement is to provide a legal framework aimed at ensuring that all imports into the Union from Vietnam of timber and timber products covered by the Agreement have been legally produced.

The Agreement:

- establishes the framework, institutions and systems for the **timber legality assurance** system for the FLEGT licensing scheme ;
- sets out the framework for **monitoring compliance** and for independent evaluation of the system;
- includes a clear commitment by Vietnam to develop legislation to ensure that timber imported in Vietnam has been legally harvested in compliance with the applicable legislation in the country of harvest;
- establishes a **mechanism for dialogue and cooperation** between the EU and Vietnam on the FLEGT licensing scheme, through a joint implementation committee;
- establishes principles of stakeholder participation, social safeguards, accountability and transparency, and mechanisms for complaints on, monitoring of and reporting on implementation of the Agreement;

- makes provision for **import controls at the EU's borders,** as provided for in Regulation (EC) No 2173/2005 on the FLEGT licensing scheme and Regulation (EC) No 1024/2008 laying down detailed measures for implementing it.

The European Commission will represent the Union within the joint implementation committee set up pursuant to the Agreement. Member States may participate in meetings of the committee as members of the Union delegation.