Resolution on illegal logging in the EU

2022/2523(RSP) - 23/06/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted the resolution on illegal logging in the EU.

The Committee on Petitions has received several petitions concerning illegal logging and specific cases of practices in breach of EU environmental legislation in some Member States. Illegal logging happens very frequently in some of the highest-quality and best-preserved forests in the EU. Unfortunately, it remains largely undetected, thereby hindering the efforts of the EU to reach the goals of the European Green Deal, the European Climate Law and the biodiversity strategy.

Parliament urged the Member States to put in place the necessary measures to carry out a **thorough control to trace the timber** used by European companies in order to ensure full compliance with the EU Timber Regulation. In addition, Members called on the Commission to **revise the EU Timber Regulation** to extend its application to all timber and timber products sold on the European market in order to ensure a level playing field and avoid unfair competition.

The resolution called on the Commission to lead the fight against illegal logging globally and to promote the implementation of a **single, clear and internationally recognised definition** of the kind of activities that fall under the concept of ‘illegal logging’ in order to address the current legal loopholes allowing for non-compliance with the standard. It should also make systematic use of all available technological developments, such as remote sensing, to ensure full compliance with the EU Timber Regulation and thus be able to comprehensively examine the state of Europe’s forests. The Commission should also ensure that adequate amounts of financial resources within national strategic plans are dedicated to biodiversity restoration in the areas most severely affected by illegal logging.

Moreover, Members called on the Commission to use its trade policy to curb illegal logging at international level.

The resolution called on Member States to:

- assume their primary responsibility for protecting the environment, including forests, and to ensure the safety of forestry officials;

- fully implement and comply with the obligations set out in existing EU environmental legislation;

- harmonise their rules on the control of illegally harvested timber as far as possible, in order to prevent illegal timber distribution routes from being exploited under the legislation of the Member States in which controls are lax;

- ensure that timber tracking systems are fully operational and that forestry sanctions are proportional and dissuasive so as to discourage illegal logging effectively;

- share best practices among law enforcement authorities in order to boost the fight against all related illegal practices;

- strictly implement the provisions of the relevant legislation currently in force by banning the use and placing on the EU market of illegal timber. Parliament called for illegal logging to be treated as a **criminal offence**, to be subject to appropriate criminal sanctions and to be brought within the scope of the revised directive on the protection of the environment through criminal law;

- respect a uniform definition of illegal logging as an environmental crime so as to guarantee that harmonised procedures and penalties are applied for the same illegal logging contraventions across the whole of the EU;

- adopt appropriate law enforcement measures in order to fight illegal logging, and to protect environmental defenders, journalists and whistle-blowers;

- make full use of the tools made available by the EU Satellite Centre to strengthen their capacities in countering illegal logging.