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## The EU must do more to stop the import of illegal timber

Alex Johnson · Thursday, February 18th, 2016

The European Union must make genuine efforts to fight the corruption which feeds illegal logging and deforestation, according to Transparency International EU. The EU [accounts for 35%](#) of the world's primary timber consumption and must take serious action to stop illegal logging in the supply chain, according to the NGO. Today, the European Commission published an evaluation on progress in tackling illegal logging and deforestation in its [EU Timber Regulations \(EUTR\)](#), which calls for European countries to enforce existing rules on forest governance.

“The EUTR is vital to protect the rights of forest-dependent communities, stop the deforestation and halt the illegal logging caused by corruption,” said Elena Gaita, Policy Officer for Corporate Transparency at Transparency International EU. “The Commission must use this opportunity to crack down on the illegal timber trade in Europe and ensure Member States enforce laws designed to protect forests. It all comes down to implementation,” continued Gaita.

Illegal logging – one of the major causes of climate change – is directly caused by rampant corruption, weak legal frameworks, collusion with government officials and lack of civil society space. The [evaluation report](#) criticises the EUTR's poor enforcement in Member States and calls for greater monitoring of the due diligence requirement.

The FLEGT Action Plan, of which the EUTR is part, requires stronger political support as well as better promotion across EU Member States to make it work, according to Transparency International EU. It is the EU's legal obligation to ensure that only properly sourced timber products enter Europe. Due to weak enforcement in some Member States large amounts of illegal timber [still enters the EU](#).

The EU's consumption of timber and agricultural products is one of the [main causes of deforestation](#). EU Member States must foresee and apply appropriate sanctions where the EUTR is violated. The EU must play a leading role in guaranteeing checks and balances which protect forests and communities from corruption and abuse by developing an ambitious Action Plan on deforestation, according to Transparency International.

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