

## EUTR and FLEGT: responding also to the deforestation challenge

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The effectiveness and impact of the EU Timber Regulation and the FLEGT Action Plan were discussed at a ThinkForest seminar at the European Parliament in Brussels on 21 April. Although Voluntary Partnership Agreements have resulted in significant improvements in forest governance, more scientific research is needed to quantify the policies' effects on trade, and their progress in responding to the global challenge of deforestation.

Paul Brannen, MEP hosted the seminar, asking how we can make the most of the instruments which the EU had designed to ensure the stability and legality of the timber trade worldwide. "We'll get nowhere to limit climate change unless we address the problem of global deforestation in a decisive manner", he pointed out. He saw the value of the FLEGT Action Plan's bilateral partnership approach, given that most deforestation was concentrated in a few countries.

Seminar participants and speakers agreed that Voluntary Partnership Agreements had resulted in **significant improvements in forest governance**, particularly in how the negotiation process had contributed to civil society dialogue. Jussi Viitanen, Head of the EU FLEGT and REDD Facilities emphasised how they had created "a space for civil society, private sector and government to come together".

However, it was clear that **more scientific research efforts are needed** to see a clear link between legality verification and trade patterns: several speakers noted that the huge complexities of FLEGT interactions, and the fairly recent introduction of the EUTR in 2013 made quantifying the effects of the policies a technical challenge. In addition there have been significant changes in the global trade environment since 2003 when FLEGT was introduced; here, the European Commission's **Independent Market Monitoring project** could play a key role in the analysis of timber trade development.



*Host of the event Mr. Paul Brannen, MEP and EFI's Lauri Hetemäki*

It was possible, however, to draw out some practical policy implications. Ragnar Jonsson introduced some of the outcomes from the new EFI scientific study “Assessment of the EU Timber Regulation and the FLEGT Action Plan”. **Benchmarking of good practices from more experienced countries is important**, to ensure the consistent implementation of the EUTR across EU member states. **Sharing of good practices** would also benefit smaller enterprises, a point emphasised in discussions with participants, who raised the issue of costs for small companies who are trying to comply with the EU Timber Regulation. Hans Stielstra, Head of Unit at DG Environment for Global Sustainability, Trade and Multilateral Agreements pointed out that the relatively new concept of monitoring organisations was one of the ways in which the EU had tried to reduce the burden.

Anders Hildeman, Global Forestry Manager, IKEA said that one of the solutions for the SMEs lay in **certification** “a tool which is fairly easy to operate” and which exists already. He talked about the complexities of verification, efficient due diligence and certification in IKEA’s supply chain, a business which currently uses 1% of world industrial wood consumption, and which sources materials from 48 countries of origin.

Questions from the audience also highlighted the potential importance of **public procurement policies**, an area where the FLEGT Action Plan could in practice **link legality and sustainability**.

Summing up, Mr Brannen said that the EU continued to be a progressive leader on climate change, and called for the bar to be raised before the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21) in December. Addressing deforestation was one area in which the EU could be active, and which could lead to big gains from a climate change perspective.



#### **Further information**

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The ThinkForest event ‘**Assessing the impact of the EU Timber Regulation and FLEGT Action Plan**’ brought together experts from science, industry, practice and decision-making, and was held at the European Parliament on 21 April.

ThinkForest is facilitated by the European Forest Institute, an independent, science-based international organization.

Download the ThinkForest brief [EU Timber Regulation and FLEGT Action Plan: Lessons learned and policy implications](#)

[Assessment of the EU Timber Regulation and FLEGT Action Plan](#) was published in European Forest Institute's From Science to Policy series in April 2015

*Photos: Simon Pugh*