



## FLEGT / FLEG

Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT)

- Illegal logging and deforestation cause severe environmental damage, including a loss of biodiversity and impacts on climate change. The livelihoods of local communities who depend on forests – including indigenous people - are affected. Legitimate operators who are trying to manage forests sustainably find it hard to compete with illegally produced timber. Where forest governance is strengthened, however, policies to conserve and sustainably manage forests and reduce deforestation become much more effective.
- Responding to public concerns on this issue, in 2003, the European Commission adopted a European Union (EU) [Action Plan for Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade \(FLEGT\)](#). The key regions and countries targeted, which together contain nearly 60% of the world's forest and supply a large proportion of internationally traded timber, are Central Africa, Russia, Tropical South America and Southeast Asia. The FLEGT Action Plan was endorsed by the Council through [Conclusions](#) published in November 2003.
- Though the ultimate goal of the Action Plan is to encourage sustainable management of forests, ensuring legality of forest operations is considered a vital first step. The Plan focuses on governance reforms and capacity building, to ensure timber exported to the EU comes only from legal sources. It includes ideas for action in areas such as public procurement and the private sector.
- A key element of the Action Plan is a voluntary scheme to ensure that only legally harvested timber is imported into the EU from countries agreeing to take part in this scheme. The Council adopted a [Regulation](#) in December 2005, allowing for the control of the entry of timber to the EU from countries entering into bilateral FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPA) with the EU. Once agreed, the VPAs will include commitments and action from both parties to halt trade in illegal timber, notably with a license scheme to verify the legality of timber. The agreements will also promote better enforcement of forest law and promote an inclusive approach involving civil society and the private sector.
- In accordance with the FLEGT Regulation a FLEGT Committee has been established. The Committee is comprised of Member States representatives and assists the Commission in the implementation of the FLEGT Regulation. Detailed rules for the implementation of the FLEGT Regulation within the EU are under discussion in the Committee.
- The European Commission has been given a mandate from the Council of Ministers to conduct negotiations in view of concluding such FLEGT VPAs. While the European Commission is leading in these negotiations, EU Member States play a key role in supporting the negotiations and the future implementation. Negotiations are currently underway with Malaysia, Indonesia and Ghana. A number of other countries have also expressed interest in VPAs.
- A series of [Briefing Notes](#) have been prepared with more information on the FLEGT VPA approach, which have been used to brief potential partners and clarify the parameters and framework the EU has adopted for FLEGT negotiations.
- Capacity-building is an important element of the FLEGT Action Plan, particularly for developing countries. The Commission is working with the EU Member States to provide such capacity-building for FLEGT Partner

countries including support to NGOs and private sector actions. Funding for FLEGT-related projects has been provided through development cooperation instruments managed by the Commission.

- An increasing number of EU Member States are adopting green public procurement policies requiring timber and timber products to be from legal and sustainable sources. Countries implementing such policies include [Belgium](#), [Denmark](#), [France](#), [Germany](#) and the [UK](#). The general EU framework for green public procurement is described [here](#). These policies are expected to have an important influence on the EU market – in many of them FLEGT licenses will be accepted as reliable proof of legality.
- A number of EU private sector timber trade federations have made commitments through Codes of Conduct to eliminate illegally harvested timber from their supply chains. Examples of such Codes can be found here: [Finland](#), [France](#), [Netherlands](#), [Spain](#), [UK](#), [EU](#), [ACE](#), [CEPI](#). Several major banks have put in place policies to ensure clients are not associated with illegal logging activities eg. [ABN-AMRO](#) and [HSBC](#).
- Stakeholders in Europe have raised questions about the effectiveness of the FLEGT VPA approach. FLEGT VPAs focus on bilateral agreements with specific countries and coverage would therefore not be universal. In addition efforts of countries under FLEGT VPAs could also potentially be circumvented. Producer countries which may not join the scheme could therefore provide a route through which illegally produced timber from VPA countries could enter the EU. Are further measures needed? Should forest producers in the EU also be required to demonstrate the legality of their timber?
- These issues were recently put to the public on the Your Voice in Europe website through a [public consultation](#) from December 2006 to March 2007. A [Synthesis report](#) on this consultation has been prepared. An impact assessment study commissioned by the European Commission will provide further information to the European Commission on the likely impact of the options put forward in the public consultation.

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