

Brussels, 5th of March 2021

To:

Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice-President, European Commission

Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, European Commission

Florika Fink-Hooijer, Director General of DG Environment, European Commission

Logging in Romania

Dear Vice President Timmermans,

Dear Commissioner Sinkevičius,

Dear Director General Fink-Hooijer,

We took note with high hopes of the decisions of the European Commission on the initiation of infringement proceedings against Romania in February 2020 for illegal logging, in particular in Natura 2000 sites. However, contrary to our expectations and hopes that this crucial treasure of European natural heritage could finally be protected and the irretrievable loss of the largest European primary forest areas outside Scandinavia would be stopped, we were upset to see the most recent documentary ,[Waldgold](#)‘ broadcasted on February 23.

This documentary shows shocking footage from autumn 2020 and proves that the loss of Romanian natural forests continues, contrary to the provisions of Natura 2000 and the requirements of the European Commission - resulting in irreparable and significant deterioration of protected habitats and species. Logging of valuable primary and old-growth forest goes on, day by day, as if there was no infringement procedure.

According to information from EuroNatur and Agent Green, two of the insiders on the developments in Romania, the Romanian government is apparently intending to only make a few (long overdue) adjustments to the national laws to comply with EU regulations, but to allow the already approved logging plans to continue without any changes. Changes to the national laws would only affect future logging permits and would have no impact on the current disastrous logging operations based on the approved 10-years forest management plans.

Approved logging operation could thus continue up to as many as 10 years. This would lead to a loss of Natura 2000 protected ecosystems and habitats of species in a catastrophic volume. Far less than 100 000 hectares out of a total of 500 000 hectares of (potential) high biodiversity value forests are currently under strict protection. And only approximately 300.000 ha of primary/old-growth forests are included in Natura 2000 sites, insufficiently protected.

If the infringement proceedings were closed without ensuring that the current logging impact on primary and old-growth forest in Romania is significantly reduced it would also seriously hamper the Green Deal and the EU's embedded Biodiversity Strategy 2030.

Finally, if Romania would be allowed to carry on with destructive logging of high biodiversity value forests in EU protected areas for several more years, thereby damaging EU protected habitats and species, this would undermine all nature protection ambitions and the credibility of the EU as a whole. Therefore, we urge you not to let Romania slip out of the infringement procedure this way. This would really be a scandalous cheat.

It would also be completely contradictory if on the one hand the European Commission is willing to invest into planting 3 billion trees in the EU while on the other hand the massive felling of old- growth forests is accepted.

We call for the necessary suspension and complete overhaul of all forest management plans and logging licenses affecting Natura 2000 sites and primary/old-growth forests and finding a solution to compensate owners accordingly. Romania's primary and old growth forests need to be preserved according to the objectives of the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and the EU Green Deal. Romania's primary and old growth forests are among the most valuable natural ecosystems of the entire EU. The EU's biodiversity goals (strict protection of 10% of the ecosystems, strict protection of all primary/old-growth forests) will become unattainable if it is not ensured that the extraordinary treasure of Romania is preserved, as much as possible completely.

Yours sincerely,

Martin HÄUSLING

Anna DEPARNAY-GRUNENBERG

Thomas WAITZ

Sarah WIENER

Michal WIEZIK