

To

Frans Timmermans, Vice-President of the European Commissioner
Virginijus Sinkevičius, European Commissioner for Environment

Illegal Logging in Romania - Infringement Procedure

Brussels, 07 October 2021

Dear Vice President Timmermans,
Dear Commissioner Sinkevičius,

It was with high hopes that we took note of the decisions of the European Commission (in February 2020) to initiate an infringement procedure against Romania, investigating the on-going illegal logging, particularly in Natura2000 and UNESCO world nature heritage sites.

For more than a year and a half we have been now waiting for a response from the Romanian government to the infringement notice from the European Commission. Nothing has happened ever since on the political level.

At the same time, the already granted logging permits for logging in many high biodiversity value forests in Natura 2000 sites are remaining in force and we receive alarming recent reports by environmental organisations and nature defenders in Romania: **The practice of illegal logging violating both national and international nature protection legislation (such as EU Nature Directives) continues unhindered.** It is a shame that this illegal practice is happening despite all the warnings and interventions of international organisations.

The old-growth and primary forests, which are part of the Europe-wide Natura2000 network of protected areas, are evidently being further exploited and we are suffering a catastrophic loss of Natura2000 protected ecosystems and habitats of species. We are risking that Europe's natural heritage at one of its most sensitive points is being irreversibly destroyed. In addition to the destruction of this important reservoir for biodiversity, we risk releasing immense quantities of sequestered CO₂. This is simply unacceptable in our fight against climate change.

All these facts leave us highly alarmed. Romania's primary and old growth forests form one of the most valuable natural ecosystems of the entire EU. The destructive and illegal logging of high biodiversity value forests in EU, which are part of protected habitats and species, undermines all nature protection ambitions and the credibility of the EU as a whole. If the European Commission remains inactive, we seriously risk obstructing the goals of the EU-Green Deal and the EU-Biodiversity Strategy 2030 (which sets out strict protection of 10% of the ecosystems, strict protection of all primary/old-growth forests).

This is why we – as Members of the European Parliament – call upon European Commission to act urgently and to fulfil their obligations as the Guardian of Treaties. We need the prosecution on the on-going illegal logging activities to proceed as soon as possible and to signal our joint effort and determination to the Romanian government to end the structural malpractice of illegal logging in Natura2000 and UNESCO world nature heritage sites!

Yours sincerely,

Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg, Greens/EFA
Martin Häusling, Greens/EFA
Manuel Bompard, The Left
Martin Hojsík, Renew
Róza Gräfin von Thun und Hohenstein, EPP
Jutta Paulus, Greens/EFA
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