

**Joint UNECE/FAO Workshop on
Illegal Logging and Trade of Illegally-derived Forest Products in the UNECE Region**
Geneva, Switzerland, 16-17 September 2004

AUSTRIAN COUNTRY REPORT TO THE WORKSHOP

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0. Abstract

In Austria forest management has been based on a well established legal and institutional framework for decades. Monitoring programmes and statistics prove the efficiency of this system. Austria's forest area has been steadily increasing. Over the last decades annual yield has been far behind timber increase, resulting in an increase in growing stock. The areas affected by offences of the forest law in connection with logging are very small; the related timber quantities are negligible. There is not the merest hint that illegal logging activities endanger sustainability of forests in Austria.

Austria imports only very small quantities of tropical timber and timber from non-European sources.

However, the Austrian Government has always stressed the importance of combating illegal logging. Thus Austria is generally in favor of the Action Plan for Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) proposed by the European Commission and supports a rapid implementation of common actions.

Austrian Development Co-operation is involved in a number of formal partnerships for rural development with regional governments, which include activities to reduce illegal encroachment and logging in ecologically highly important woodlands and forests.

1. Illegal logging

1.1. Types of illegal logging

According to the statistics provided by the forest authorities of the provinces, illegal logging is a negligible problem in Austria. In 2003, 255 offences of the forest law in connection with logging was reported, of them 169 clearings without permission, 57 cuttings without permission, 7 prohibited large-scale clear-cuttings and 22 cuttings of immature stands. However, the affected areas are small-sized in average so that only a very low percentage of the Austrian removals derive from illegal logging.

1.2. What mechanisms are in place to monitor or estimate their importance?

According to the Forest Act all forests (both public and private forests) are subject to official monitoring. This consists in the right and duty of the forest authorities to monitor adherence to the provisions of this Federal Act, the relevant directives that have been issued as well as individual orders and prescriptions. To this end their organs are entitled to enter any forest, drive on the forest roads and require the owner of the forest, his forest organs and forest protection organs to provide information and evidence where it is of significance for monitoring the forest.

Moreover the forest authorities shall assess the timber harvest periodically, keep records of the monitoring tasks and compile comparable statistics as of the offences of law.

1.3. In total, in your opinion, what is the volume of illegally logged wood in your country, as a percent of removals:

Less than 1%.

This estimate is based on reports from forest authorities.

1.4. Additional comments on the causes and extent of illegal logging in your country

The latest results of the Austrian Forest Inventory (2000/02) showed in general the maintenance and sustainable management of forests. The Austrian forest area has been steadily increasing. Over the last decades annual yield has been far behind timber increase. This resulted in an increase in growing stock to more than one billion solid cubic meters. There is not the merest hint that illegal logging activities endanger sustainability.

2. Trade in products of illegal logging

2.1. Are you aware of any of the following:

- 2.1.1. Smuggling of roundwood or forest products (import or export)
- 2.1.2. False declaration of goods (value, species, origin)
- 2.1.3. Other trade related falsification (e.g. falsification of certificates of SFM)

Austrian customs authority has not reported any cases of smuggling (import or export), false declaration (value, species, origin) or other trade related falsifications (including CITES) of roundwood or forest products.

2.2. What mechanisms are in place to monitor discrepancies between declared imports and exports and actual imports and exports?

According to the EU Customs Code all imports from third countries and all exports to third countries are subject to a customs clearance procedure and to risk analysis based customs controls. These controls include sample checks of the goods to verify if the customs declaration is correct or if there are discrepancies between the declared goods and the actual imported or exported goods.

2.3. In your opinion what is the volume exported and imported of illegally-sourced wood as percentage of total wood exports?

Less than 5%.

Austria has a very strong sawmill, board and paper industry. Due to this Austria is a big importer of industrial roundwood (7.5 Million m³ in 2003) and an important exporter of sawn wood, panels and paper. 95% of imported roundwood are from neighboring countries and Poland, only 0.25% are from Russia and hardly any roundwood comes from outside Europe and Russia. Because of the origin of the Austrian roundwood imports it is assumed that less than 5% of the imports are from illegal sources.

2.4. If there are significant volumes or values involved, please describe what is known about the type of fraud, its estimated volume and its causes.

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2.5. Additional comments on the causes and extent of trade in products from illegal logging in your country

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3. Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade policies

3.1. Is your country involved in any bilateral or multilateral initiatives on FLEGT?

The Austrian Government has at this point not entered bilateral or multilateral partnerships with the aim of combating illegal logging in the producer countries and reducing the import of illegal wood. Austrian Development Co-operation is however involved in a number of formal partnerships for rural development with regional governments (e.g. in Ethiopia and Tanzania) which include activities to reduce illegal encroachment and logging in ecologically highly important woodlands and forests. Additionally, similar partnerships exist with non-government institutions in Brazil and Nicaragua. Above all, these partnerships focus on the promotion of sustainable forest management in general. No activities are carried out regarding the reduction of import of illegal wood in consuming countries.

However, the Austrian Government is well aware of the problem and has always stressed the importance of combating illegal logging. Thus Austria is basically in favor of the Action Plan proposed by the European Commission and supports a rapid implementation of common actions.

3.2. Does your country have official policies to reduce or eliminate illegal logging?

As illegal logging is no significant problem in Austria, there is no special policy to reduce or eliminate it. The protection, the management, and the sustainable development of forest have been objectives of forestry policy for generations. The Austrian Forest Legislation System is highly developed and well implemented by the national authorities.

3.3. Does your country have official policies to reduce or eliminate trade of products from illegal logging?

In a free trade zone like the European Union only a common action will be successful in eliminating trade of products from illegal logging. For this reason Austrian Government is supporting the EU Action Plan for Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT).

In this regard it should be considered that Austria imports only very small quantities of tropical timber and timber from non-European sources.

4. Additional information

In June 22, 2004, the issue of illegal logging and related trade was addressed by the Austrian Forest Dialogue in a special workshop titled 'Austria's international responsibility for SFM'. The Austrian Forest Dialogue is a long term oriented dialogue process based on the principles of National Forest Programmes aiming towards forest policy formulation based on broad stakeholder participation. There is common understanding about the negative economical and ecological consequences of illegal logging and related trade, which therefore contradicts sustainability. There was agreement that illegal logging is not a domestic issue, but has to be solved in international cooperation. While consensus could be reached concerning Austria's support for the FLEGT Action Plan of EU, different views were expressed regarding individual actions to be taken.

Vienna, 16 August 2004