

## INTEGRATION OF EU TIMBER REGULATION REQUIREMENTS INTO FOREST POLICY IN MONTENEGRO AND THE REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA (BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA)

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### ABSTRACT

Western Balkan is regarded as a priority area for improving forest legality monitoring systems in line with the European Union Timber Regulation (EUTR). Yet, research on EUTR implementation in Western Balkan countries is still quite limited. Our study aims to contribute to the understanding of the integration of EUTR requirements in Western Balkan, by analyzing the forest policy frameworks of Montenegro and the Republic of Srpska, using qualitative content analysis. To this aim, documents were coded using coding categories derived from EUTR. To verify our findings, we conducted key expert interviews in both countries and analyzed them using NVivo software. Our results point out that both countries have well-developed policy frameworks addressing illegal logging and the prevention of illegal activities in forestry, especially through dedicated action plans. Key actors in both countries are public actors, including Ministries responsible for forestry, public forest enterprises, and forestry inspectorates. The forestry sector in Montenegro is facing significant changes due to the termination of concessions, and new organization of management of state forests, including forest certification. Preliminary research indicates that the Republic of Srpska, has relatively well-established bodies for implementation, but, in certain situations, insufficient exchange of information. With ongoing discourses on Green Deal policies and the increasing focus on "deforestation-free" commodities, stricter implementation of EUTR at the European level might be expected. We conclude that both countries would have to build capacities for EUTR implementation and become more transparent and responsible concerning information availability. In addition, to successfully implement EUTR increased number of checks, as well as stricter fines will be needed in both countries.

**Key words:** policy analysis, the legality of timber, EUTR

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