

Holzindustrie Schweighofer appalled by false accusations and dubious procedural methods of environmental protection organisations

Vienna – 21 October 2015: At a collaborative media conference in Vienna, three environmental protection organisations presented a report on irregularities in forestry in Romania.

This report attempts to present an entanglement of Holzindustrie Schweighofer in illegal dealings, although knowledge of the facts and accurate observation of these facts show that no such dealings or unlawful acts have occurred.

Environmentalists have criticised the lack of "Transport Stamps" on timber – stamps which are not legally stipulated

Holzindustrie Schweighofer has been accused of processing round timber without a "legal transport stamp". The fact is that such general "Transport stamps" do not exist for all round timber on transport routes. First of all, the labelling regulations concern only round timber with diameters of more than 20 cm. In case of logs, the labelling obligations only apply on the route from the forest to the first processing stations. There these logs are generally cut up into several pieces for transportation to the sawmills – for example, a twelve metre-long log is divided into three pieces of round timber, each four metres long. Therefore it is logical and completely conformant with the regulations that only one of these remaining parts bears the stamp directly applied in the forest.

Note: Approximately 50 percent of all round timber which is processed at Holzindustrie Schweighofer has a diameter of less than 20 cm.

Photographs of logs without visible labelling are therefore no indication whatsoever that this might be non-registered timber. One could also simply photograph the log section with the logging stamp from the wrong side, and no stamp would be seen. All accusations by the environmentalists with regard to this are therefore factually incorrect, and constitute misinformation of the media and of the public.

The EIA once again quotes edited video material as the alleged proof for misconduct of Schweighofer employees – inspection of the original film footage is however being refused.

In April 2015, the EIA presented a video, filmed using a hidden camera, the material of which was at the very least severely edited. Using this material, the organisation wishes to prove that employees from Holzindustrie Schweighofer are prepared to purchase timber without sufficient logging approvals.

We are aware of the problem of illegal logging in Romania.

However, Holzindustrie Schweighofer only purchases timber from legal sources. Every single timber delivery is rigorously inspected through all possible means at the plant gates for the correctness of the original documents, and also by comparing them with the national database.

The scene in the edited video, intended to show the consent to purchase illegally logged timber, could therefore never have led to a delivery or processing of such timber, because this would not have got past the stringent inspections at the plant gates.

Dialogues which ascertain that all timber deliveries must of course accord with all legal regulations – also those which go over and above the agreed minimum delivery arrangements, have apparently been edited out or intentionally left out.

However, until today the EIA refuses to allow viewing of the unprocessed video footage by an independent entity. Persons with close relations to environmental organisations, who have been able to view the entire footage, have informally confirmed Holzindustrie Schweighofer's point of view.

The EIA incorrectly presents the Romanian matter of restitution as Schweighofer's problem

In their report, the EIA also states that a major part of the property purchases made by a subsidiary of Holzindustrie Schweighofer are currently in dispute in the course of restitution proceedings. This assertion, too, is entirely untrue. There are no such legal proceedings of any kind pending.

Only in the case of one single transaction, which concerns 833 hectares of the total of 14,500 hectares of property of a Holzindustrie Schweighofer subsidiary, a renewed preliminary examination is being conducted as to whether the seller was in fact the legal owner of the property. However, no accusations of any kind are being made against Holzindustrie Schweighofer in relation to this matter.

Naturally – also in our interests as purchaser – the ownership status of the respective sellers has always been legally and governmentally checked for all property purchases, and all purchases have then been approved through entry into the land register.

Holzindustrie Schweighofer regrets this matter, and is surprised that even recognised environmental protection organisations have allowed themselves to be medially instrumentalised by individual activists who not always work seriously, without checking the factual and legal position in advance.

With regard to this, the company repeats its offer of dialogue and cooperation with all environmental protection organisations which are interested in the discussion or the implementation of projects for the improvement of the forestry situation in Romania.

Holzindustrie Schweighofer itself has long called for improvements in the governmental control measures in order to uncover black sheep and system errors and to combat these, as this is also in the interests of all reputable companies on the market.

Further information available on www.schweighofer-initiative.org



About Holzindustrie Schweighofer

Holzindustrie Schweighofer is a part of the Schweighofer Group, and is rooted in a traditional Austrian family company with more than 400 years of experience in timber processing. Today, the group is mainly active in the timber industry, but also in cellulose production, forestry management, bioenergy extraction and in the property sector.

Holzindustrie Schweighofer put their first sawmill into operation in Romania in 2003. In the meantime, Schweighofer is a leading company in the European timber-processing industry, and currently employs approximately 2,880 employees in the plants in Romania – three sawmills, a blockboard plant and an edge-glued panel plant. In the third quarter of 2015, the 5th Schweighofer plant in Romania – the third sawmill for the Group - was put into operation. In October 2015 a modern sawmill in Germany (Saxony, Kodersdorf) was taken over. The company is also active in the Czech Republic, in Bulgaria and in the Ukraine.

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