



Conflict minerals: MEPs ask for mandatory certification of EU importers

Plenary sessions [20-05-2015 - 14:19]

EU importers of tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold for manufacturing consumer goods need to be certified by the EU to ensure that they do not fuel conflicts and human rights abuses in conflict areas, say MEPs in their position on a draft law adopted on Wednesday by 402 votes to 118, with 171 abstentions.

Parliament voted by 400 votes to 285, with 7 abstentions, to overturn the Commission's proposal as well as the one adopted by the international trade committee and requested mandatory compliance for "all Union importers" sourcing in conflict areas.

In addition, "downstream" companies, that is, the 880 000 potentially affected EU firms that use tin, tungsten, tantalum and gold in manufacturing consumer products, will be obliged to provide information on the steps they take to identify and address risks in their supply chains for the minerals and metals concerned.

Request for mandatory certification

As metal smelters and gold refiners are the last point at which the minerals' origin can be effectively traced, MEPs go beyond the Commission's "self-certification" approach and call for smelters and refiners to undergo a compulsory, independent, third-party audit to check their "due diligence" practices.

Parliament also asks the Commission to grant financial support to micro-businesses and small and medium-sized firms wishing to obtain certification through the EU's COSME programme (EU programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises).

Strengthened review clause

Parliament also insists on tougher monitoring of the scheme, with a review two years after it is applied and every three years thereafter (instead of after three and six years respectively, as planned by Commission)

Geographical scope

The regulation applies to all conflict-affected high risk areas in the world, of which the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Great Lakes area are the most obvious example. The draft law defines 'conflict-affected and high-risk areas' as those in a state of armed conflict, with widespread violence, the collapse of civil infrastructure, fragile post-conflict areas and areas of weak or non-existent governance and security, characterised by "widespread and systematic violations of human rights".

Next steps

In a vote of 343 votes to 331, with 9 abstentions, Parliament decided not to close the first reading position and to enter into informal talks with the EU member states to seek agreement on the final version of the law.

Note to Editors

Tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold are used in many consumer products in the EU, in particular by the automotive, electronics, aerospace, packaging, construction, lighting,

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industrial machinery and tooling industries, as well as in jewellery. The upcoming law potentially affects 880,000 EU manufacturers, most of which are small or medium-sized.

*EU "Supply-Chain Due Diligence" standards will be based on the **OECD Due Diligence Guidance** recommendations, which are designed to help companies respect human rights and avoid contributing to conflict through their mineral purchases from conflict-affected and high-risk areas.*

Procedure: Ordinary legislative procedure, 1st reading

Further information

- Adopted text will be available here (click on 20.05.2015)
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/texts-adopted.html>
- Video recording of debate (click on 19.05.2015)
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/plenary/search-by-date>
- Video of the press conference (20.05.2015, 10.30)
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/other-events/schedule>
- Audiovisual material for professionals
: <http://audiovisual.europarl.europa.eu/Assetdetail.aspx?ref=I103134>
- EP Research - Import of minerals from conflict areas:
[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2015/556993/EPRS_ATA\(2015\)556993_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2015/556993/EPRS_ATA(2015)556993_EN.pdf)
- Commission communication on responsible sourcing of minerals from conflict-affected and high-risk areas
: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=JOIN:2014:0008:FIN:EN:PDF>

Political groups

- Press release by the EPP group: <http://www.eppgroup.eu/press-release/Conflict-Minerals%3A-we-need-an-integrated-EU-approach>
- Press release by the S&D group: <http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/pittella-sds-lead-parliaments-vote-end-conflict-minerals-eu-market>
- Press release by the ALDE group: <http://www.alde.eu/nc/press/press-and-release-news/press-release/article/conflict-minerals-a-good-basis-for-negotiation-45288/>
- Press release by the GUE/NGL group: <http://www.guengl.eu/news/article/gue-ngl-news/strong-and-binding-legislation-required-for-conflict-minerals>

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