

IKEA®

EUROPE'S VANISHING FORESTS (PART 1): HOW IKEA DRIVES DESTRUCTION IN THE CARPATHIANS

Case Study Romania: The Destruction of Rusca Montană

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Europe's Vanishing Forests (Part 1): How Ikea drives destruction in the Carpathians

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October 2026

Photo [cover]: Clear cut forest area in Rusca Montană, Romania.

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1.0

INTRODUCTION

Europe positions itself as a global leader in environmental stewardship. Yet, far from the legislative chambers of Brussels, high-value ecosystems are being systematically cleared to supply global markets with short-lived consumer goods. This contradiction is strikingly visible across the Carpathian Mountains – one of Europe's last remaining wildernesses. Home to the continent's largest populations of brown bears, wolves, chamois, and lynx, as well as more than a third of all European plant species¹, these forests of high biodiversity value and potential act as vital ecological shields against climate collapse and biodiversity loss.

Despite their ecological significance, an area equivalent to five football fields is lost to wood extraction every hour across the Carpathian range². In Romania alone, according to Romanian watchdog România Curată, official inventory data indicate that at least eight million cubic meters of wood are harvested illegally each year³.

Crucial to understanding this systemic destruction is the role of the industry, including Ikea. As the world's largest furniture retailer⁴, as one of the biggest users of wood in the world⁵, and Romania's largest private forest owner⁶, Ikea

¹ UNEP/DEWA, Carpathian Environment Outlook (KEO), United Nations Environment Programme / Division of Early Warning and Assessment, Geneva, Switzerland, 2007, p. 92.

² Greenpeace Central and Eastern Europe, The Carpathian Forests: Europe's Natural Heritage Under Attack, 2022. URL: <https://www.greenpeace.org/static/planet4-poland-stateless/2024/03/8ee7c77b-carpathian-forest-under-attack-report.pdf> (accessed September 24, 2026).

³ M. Goțiu, Studiu: Tăierile ilegale de păduri se mențin la un nivel uriaș în România. Dar implicarea civică le-a redus substanțial. Ce arată noul Inventar Forestier Național [Study: Illegal logging remains at a massive level in Romania. But civic involvement has reduced it substantially. What the new National Forest Inventory shows], România Curată, 2025. URL: <https://www.romaniacurata.ro/studiu-taierile-ilegale-de-paduri-se-mentin-la-un-nivel-urias-in-romania-dar-implicarea-civica-le-a-reduc-substantial-ce-arata-noul-inventar-forestier-national/> (accessed September 24, 2026).

⁴ Ikano Group, [Our Year: Ikano Retail FY25 Annual Report](#), 2026.

⁵ Ikea Museum, Good for the Forest, n.d. URL: <https://ikeamuseum.com/en/explore/the-story-of-ikea/good-for-the-forest/> (accessed September 9, 2026).

⁶ Termene.ro, Afaceri cu păduri: Suedezii din familia Ikea, singurii străini din Top 20 într-o piață dominată de capital românesc. Analiza sectorului forestier 2008–2024, 2026. URL:

carries a profound ecological responsibility. Although this corporate giant operates and sells globally, the heart of its logging activities remains in Central, Northern, and Eastern Europe. In 2024, Ikea sourced an estimated 408,000 m³ of virgin wood from Romania – a volume equivalent to roughly 20 km² of precious forest per year⁷. While Ikea relies heavily on Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification to assure consumers of its sustainability, ongoing field investigations reveal systemic failures in its supply chain.⁸

CASE STUDY FINDINGS

This latest investigation by Greenpeace Romania documents severe ecological degradation within a protected Natura 2000 site in the Romanian Carpathians (Poiana Ruscă mountains, Parcel 37). The systematic clearing of this critical habitat feeds Ikea's regional furniture supplier network.

Key findings:

- A total clearcut was executed completely ignoring the primary protective role of the forest.
- Ignoring the Natura 2000 regulations, the logging left zero standing canopy, removing all required habitat trees (0 remaining vs. minimum 5 trees/ha) and all deadwood (0 remaining vs. minimum 10 m³/ha).
- Heavy machinery on steep slopes caused severe soil erosion and massive damage to fragile topsoil.

<https://termene.ro/articole/afaceri-cu-paduri-suedezii-din-familia-ikea-singurii-straini-din-top-20-intr-o-piata-dominata-de-capital-romanesc-analiza-sectorului-forestier-2008-2024> (accesat la 24 septembrie 2026 2026).

⁷ Inter IKEA Group, The wood we use: Virgin wood sourcing by country (Romania), Inter IKEA Systems B.V., Delft, 2025. URL: <https://www.ikea.com/global/en/our-business/sustainability/wood-we-use/> (accessed September 24, 2026).

⁸ Greenpeace CEE, 2024, Assemble the Truth, <https://www.greenpeace.org/static/planet4-international-stateless/2024/04/a6598935-nature-crime-files-romania.pdf> : Established that seven primary manufacturers for ubiquitous Ikea furniture lines sourced timber from high-biodiversity value forests and in two cases even from protected Carpathian old-growth forests.

Greenpeace CEE, 2025, Felling the Future, <https://www.greenpeace.org/static/planet4-denmark-stateless/2025/09/c099d16b-report-2025-felling-the-future-eng.pdf> : Demonstrated that voluntary certification schemes (FSC) and internal tracking systems fail to prevent habitat destruction, functioning instead as mechanisms for corporate greenwashing while clear-cutting continues under a label of sustainability.

- The Valea Alunului riverbed was converted into a haul road, leading to direct fuel and oil spills.
- The area (Parcel 37) was logged and then removed from strict protection proposed lists before legal status could be enacted.
- State-sanctioned logging under active FSC certification failed to prevent destruction.
- Official timber-tracking data connects the logging contractor directly to a primary Ikea supplier.

The destruction documented in Rusca Montană is neither an isolated incident nor an operational oversight; rather, it reflects a broader, systemic pattern in Romania documented across three years of Greenpeace Romania field investigations (including this one).⁹

POLICY GAPS

Although EU policy targets mandate the protection of 30% of land area by 2030, including a strict protection of at least a third of these¹⁰, leaving them essentially undisturbed from human pressures and threats, national implementation remains critically delayed. However, nature protection is not merely a political responsibility. Embedded in the UN Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF) – an international agreement ratified by 196 nations – is Target 15. Target 15 of the KM-GBF asks states to ensure that large and transnational corporations must “monitor, assess, and transparently disclose their risks, dependencies and impacts on biodiversity” to “progressively reduce negative impacts on biodiversity, increase positive impacts, reduce biodiversity-related risks ... and promote sustainable patterns of production¹¹” across their operations, supply and value chains and portfolios. Given its dominant market share and massive global timber footprint, Ikea thus carries a clear responsibility under this international mandate to act – even ahead of lagging national legislation.

⁹ Greenpeace CEE, Assemble the Truth, <https://www.greenpeace.org/static/planet4-international-stateless/2024/04/a6598935-nature-crime-files-romania.pdf> 2024. Greenpeace CEE, Felling the Future, 2025, <https://www.greenpeace.org/static/planet4-denmark-stateless/2025/09/c099d16b-report-2025-felling-the-future-eng.pdf>

¹⁰ European Commission, EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 – Bringing Nature Back into Our Lives, COM(2020) 380 final, Brussels, 2020, p. 4, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:a3c806a6-9ab3-11ea-9d2d-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF

¹¹ CBD, Target 15: Businesses Assess, Disclose and Reduce Biodiversity-Related Risks and Negative Impacts, 2026. URL: <https://www.cbd.int/gbf/targets/15/> (accessed September 9, 2026).

2.0 WHAT IS AT STAKE: ECOLOGICAL VALUE AND LEGAL STATUS OF THE CASE STUDY AREA

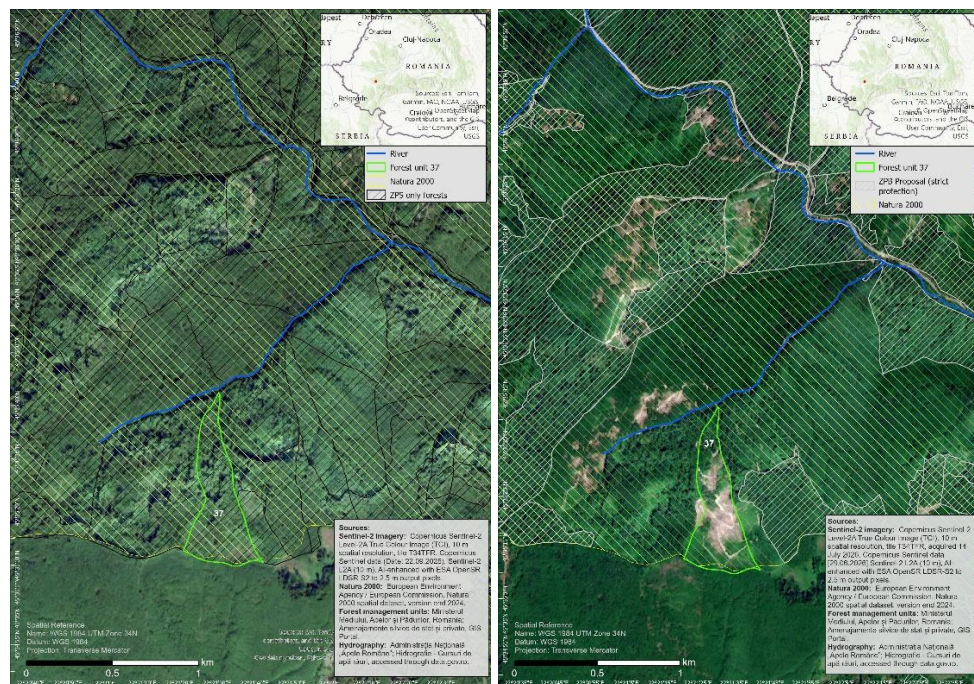


Figure 1: Maps 1 showing the position of Parcel 37 within the Natura 2000 ROSAC 0219 (yellow hatching) and strict protection zones identified in March 2025 (ZPS only forests, dark grey hatching). Map 2: Parcel 37 with the clearcut visible, the Natura 2000 yellow hatching and strict protection zones (ZPS) officially submitted in August 2026 (grey hatching). Maps source: Greenpeace Romania.

ECOLOGICAL VALUE

Deep within Western Romania's Poiana Ruscă Mountains lies a forest of exceptional biological complexity. This multi-tiered ecosystem encompasses four vital habitat types: acid-soil mountain beech forests, nutrient-rich beech forests, native Dacian beech forests, and – most critically – the priority-designated alluvial alder and ash forests along watercourses.¹²

These habitats form a sanctuary for a network of threatened wildlife, including¹³:

Apex Mammals: Brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*), grey wolf (*Canis lupus*), and European otter (*Lutra lutra*).

Amphibians & Rare Invertebrates: Yellow-bellied toad (*Bombina variegata*), alongside rare butterfly species such as *Euphydryas maturna*, *Lycaena dispar*, and *Nymphalis vaualbum*.

Beyond its localized biodiversity, the site serves as a vital ecological corridor, maintaining connectivity between the Apuseni Mountains and the Southern Carpathians.¹⁴



Figure 2: Old-growth forest inside the Rusca Montană Natura 2000 site (ROSCI0219). Photo: Greenpeace Romania

¹² European Environment Agency, Natura 2000 Network Site: Rusca Montană (ROSAC0219), Biodiversity Information System for Europe, n.d. URL: <https://biodiversity.europa.eu/sites/natura2000/ROSAC0219> (accessed September 23, 2026).

¹³ European Environment Agency, Natura 2000 Network Site: Rusca Montană (ROSAC0219), Biodiversity Information System for Europe, n.d. URL: <https://biodiversity.europa.eu/sites/natura2000/ROSAC0219> (accessed September 23, 2026).

¹⁴ FFI, WWF Romania, Management Strategy for the Apuseni – Southern Carpathians Ecological Corridor, LIFE Connect Carpathians Project (LIFE12 NAT/UK/001068), Fauna & Flora International and WWF Romania, 2018, <http://connectcarpathians.ro/>

CRITICAL ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

Beyond its intrinsic biological value, the forest performs a vital civic function. The surrounding watershed – the elevated land area that drains rain and snow melt into a shared water system – along Valea Alunului feeds directly into the Lozna River downstream.¹⁵ This river serves as a drinking water source for the local Rusca Montană community.¹⁶ Because Valea Alunului was utilized as a heavy hauling road to transport timber from parcel 37, the logging operations directly threatened the public water supply. Under environmental legislation, strict uphill sanitation rules and forestry restrictions are mandated in such catchment zones to prevent severe sedimentation and chemical contamination.¹⁷



*Figure 3:
Old-growth
forest with a
stream
inside the
Rusca
Montană
Natura 2000
site
(ROSCI0219).
Photo:
Greenpeace
Romania*

¹⁵ MMAP, Anexă: Plan de Management Rusca Montană, Guvernul României / Ministerul Mediului, Apelor și Pădurilor, 2016, pp. 7, 12.

https://www.mmediu.ro/app/webroot/uploads/files/2016-02-19_Anexa_Plan_management_Rusca_Montana.pdf

¹⁶ Field investigation confirmed the presence of an active municipal surface water intake on the Lozna River downstream of Valea Alunului, serving the public water supply system of Rusca Montană. While operational permits (Autorizația de Gospodărire a Apelor) issued by SGA Caraș-Severin for local municipal abstractions are maintained in regional water registries rather than public digital portals, physical infrastructure at the site — including the settling basin — establishes the direct hydrological link between logging operations in parcel 37 and the local drinking water source.

¹⁷ For the site-specific regulations see: Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests (Romania), Environmental Permit No. 30 / 02.10.2024 (Rusca Montană Forest District), 2024, p. 20. <https://mmediu.ro/app/webroot/uploads/files/Aviz%20de%20mediu%2839%29.pdf>. In general, forestry operations and the strict protection of water resources during logging are primarily regulated by the Forestry Code, alongside specific water management legislation and technical implementation guidelines. The core legal framework consists of the following key statutes and regulations: the Forestry Code (Legea nr. 46/2008, republished), Instructions on Deadlines, Methods, and Periods for Harvesting, Extraction, and Transport of Timber (Ordinul nr. 1540/2011), The Water Law (Legea nr. 107/1996, with subsequent amendments), Emergency Ordinance on Protected Natural Areas (OUG nr. 57/2007) & Local Management Plans.

LEGAL STATUS

Located within the Rusca Montană commune of Caraș-Severin county, the area holds four primary habitat types that are protected under EU conservation frameworks, classifying the area as a protective forest ecosystem tasked with conserving habitats of community interest and safeguarding species listed under the EU Habitats Directive.¹⁸

The site is an integral component of the broader Rusca Montană Natura 2000 network¹⁹, designated in February 2009. This surrounding protected area encompasses three Nationally Designated Areas of exceptional conservation value:

- **Pleșu Forest Nature Reserve** (IUCN Category IV)²⁰
- **Culmea Varniței and Dealul Negrii quasi-virgin forests** (IUCN Category Ia/Ib)²¹
- **Rusca Montană Nature Reserve** (IUCN Category IV)²²

In March 2025, the site was formally identified by the government contracted Pro Biodiversitas S.R.L. Association as an ecologically critical candidate eligible for

¹⁸ According to the forestry management plan, parcel 37 has the 5Q function, which is a designation indicating forest stands with protective value for habitats of community interest and species of special interest located within Natura 2000 protected areas. The 5Q functional category designation is found in the attributes' table of the parcel as published in the official timber traceability portal inspectorulpadurii.ro. The 5Q legal enactment stems from Ministerul Mediului, Apelor și Pădurilor, Ordinul nr. 2536/2022 pentru aprobarea Normelor tehnice privind amenajarea pădurilor, Monitorul Oficial al României, Partea I, Nr. 999 bis, Anexa 1, cap. II, secț. 1.5 (cat. funcțională 1.5.Q / 5Q), 2022. URL:

<https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/260400> (accessed September 24, 2026).

¹⁹ European Environment Agency. n.d. "Natura 2000 Network Site: Rusca Montană (ROSAC0219)." Biodiversity Information System for Europe. Accessed September 23, 2026. <https://biodiversity.europa.eu/sites/natura2000/ROSAC0219>.

²⁰ Guvernul României, Hotărârea nr. 2151/2004 privind instituirea regimului de arie naturală protejată pentru noi zone, Monitorul Oficial al României, Partea I, Nr. 38, 2005. URL: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/58628> (accessed September 24, 2026).

²¹ MMAP, Catalogul Național al Pădurilor Virgine și Cvasivirgine din România: Județul Caraș-Severin (Situl Culmea Varniței – Dealul Negrii), Ministerul Mediului, Apelor și Pădurilor, 2018 (updated 2023). URL: <https://mmediu.ro/portal-gis/date-gis/paduri-virgine-si-cvasivirgine/catalogul-national-al-padurilor-virgine-si-cvasivirgine/> (accessed September 24, 2026).

²² Guvernul României, Hotărârea nr. 2151/2004 privind instituirea regimului de arie naturală protejată pentru noi zone, Monitorul Oficial al României, Partea I, Nr. 38, Anexa 1 ("Rezervația naturală Rusca Montană"), 2005. URL: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/58628> (accessed September 24, 2026).

strict protection under Romania's National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP).²³ This mapping process directly supported national alignment with the EU biodiversity Strategy, which mandates the strict protection of 10% of land area.²⁴

However, by August 2026, the area was omitted from the officially submitted candidate list.²⁵ While no formal justification has been issued by the Association or by state authorities, field evidence supports the conclusion that the exclusion was motivated by the recent clearcutting operations, which degraded the site's ecological integrity prior to formal legal designation.²⁶



Figure 4: Old-growth forest inside the Rusca Montană Natura 2000 site (ROSCI0219). Photo: Greenpeace Romania

²³ MMAP, Service Contract No. 119 Dated 16/08/2023, Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests (Component 2, Investment I.3, National Recovery and Resilience Plan), 2023.

²⁴ Guvernul României, Emergency Ordinance No. 25/2026 Amending and Supplementing Emergency Ordinance No. 57/2007 on the Regime of Protected Natural Areas, Conservation of Natural Habitats, Wild Flora and Fauna, Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, No. 296, 2026.

²⁵ Both the March 2025 draft map and the August 2026 final officially submitted map have been requested and received by Greenpeace Romania from the Association contracted by the Ministry Environment, Waters and Forests.

²⁶ The elimination of the parcel was observed by comparing the two datasets. We can establish a plausible causality link between the date of the first dataset (March 2025), the logging period (October 2025 to March 2026) and the date of the second dataset (August 2026).

3.0 ANATOMY OF DESTRUCTION — LOGGING OPERATIONS



Figure 5: The clearcut in forestry parcel 37 of the Rusca Montană Natura 2000 site (ROSCI0219). Photo: Greenpeace Romania

Between October 9, 2025, and March 31, 2026, logging operations in Parcel 37 harvested 4,174 cubic meters of timber – over 94% of the 4,419.88 cubic meter limit authorized under official permits, according to Romania’s SUMAL traceability system.

Ground investigations by Greenpeace Romania and high-resolution drone surveillance documented operational breaches, violating both national forestry laws and binding EU environmental standards.

HOW A PROTECTED FOREST WAS CLEARCUT

The operation was officially designated as an "overstory removal" – the final stage of a progressive shelterwood system. In professional forestry, a shelterwood system is a multi-year process where older trees are gradually thinned to let seeds drop and establish a young forest underneath; loggers are in general legally allowed - pending on site specific provisions - to cut the remaining mature canopy ("overstory") only when thriving young growth covers at least 70% of the ground.²⁷

In this case, the operator executed a complete clearcut without the required 70% young growth underneath and without observing the site specific requirements (Natura 2000 provisions).

Findings validated by Greenpeace Romania experts during the field trip proved three critical operational and ecological breaches:

- **Frail regeneration:** The sparse regeneration underneath was compromised during logging, leaving the site exposed. During intensifying summer heatwaves, the soil cannot retain the moisture required for sapling survival.
- **Extreme soil vulnerability:** The topsoil on this steep incline measures a mere 10 to 15 centimeters deep. Deprived of canopy cover and root stability, this fragile substrate is subject to drying out and to rapid erosion.
- **Violations of Natura 2000 provisions:** The operation breached the Rusca Montană Natura 2000 Management Plan (ROSCI0219)²⁸, the Appropriate

²⁷ MAPPM, Technical Norms for the Selection and Application of Silvicultural Treatments (Norm 3), approved by Order of the Ministry of Waters, Forests and Environmental Protection No. 1650/2000, Published in the Official Gazette of Romania (Monitorul Oficial), Part I, No. 680 bis/2000, Ch. III, secs. 3.1.2–3.1.3. Approving Order available at:

<https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/260369>

²⁸ MMAP, Planul de Management al Sitului Natura 2000 ROSAC0219 Rusca Montană [Management Plan for Natura 2000 Site ROSAC0219 Rusca Montană], Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests / Government of Romania, 2016. URL:

https://www.mmediu.ro/app/webroot/uploads/files/2016-02-19_Plan_management_Rusca_Montana.pdf (accessed September 24, 2026). Note: This document is officially labeled as a draft; in ANANP's (National Agency for Protected Natural Areas) Master Registry, Order No. 1209/2016 remains the active governance framework for ROSCI0219.

Assessment²⁹ and the ensuing Environmental Permit³⁰ as well as the binding 2021 ANANP decree³¹. These frameworks mandate leaving at least 5 habitat trees (diameter >45 cm) and 10 cubic meters of deadwood (diameter >35 cm) per hectare. Operators left zero habitat trees or deadwood on site.

It is precisely for such systemic practices and widespread illegal logging mechanisms that the European Commission launched Infringement Procedure (2020/2033)³² against Romania.

GEOTECHNICAL VIOLATIONS

Forestry regulations explicitly ban tractor skid trails on slopes exceeding 35 degrees and mandate the deployment of suspended cable cranes on slopes above 35 degrees to prevent catastrophic soil displacement.³³ The median slope value for the observed parcel is 34°³⁴, meaning that approximately 50% of the parcel's surface area physically exceeds 34°. Spatially, this guarantees that significant portions of the logged terrain exceed the absolute 35° limit established by the forestry legal framework. Excavating or operating tractor skid trails across these >35° sections is a direct regulatory violation.

²⁹ Ministerul Mediului, Apelor și Pădurilor, Studiu de Evaluare Adecvată pentru Amenajamentul Fondului Forestier Proprietate Publică a Statului, Administrat de RNP - Romsilva, prin Ocolul Silvic Rusca Montană, Direcția Silvică Caraș-Severin, Guvernul României, 2024. URL:

<https://mmediu.ro/app/webroot/uploads/files/Studiu%20de%20Evaluare%20Adecvata%286%29.pdf> (accessed September 23, 2026).

³⁰ Ministerul Mediului, Apelor și Pădurilor, Aviz de Mediu Nr. 30, Guvernul României, 2024. URL: <https://mmediu.ro/app/webroot/uploads/files/Aviz%20de%20mediu%2839%29.pdf> (accessed September 23, 2026).

³¹ Agenția Națională pentru Aree Naturale Protejate, Formularul Standard Natura 2000: ROSCI0219 Rusca Montană, Guvernul României, 2021. URL: <https://ananp.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/ROSCI0219-20210204110739320.pdf> (accessed September 24, 2026). These type of decrees with general minimum conservation measures have been introduced specifically as a response to the infringement process 2033 cited below.

³² European Commission, Infringement Decisions Database: Case INFR(2020)2033, 2020. URL: [https://ec.europa.eu/implementing-eu-law/search-infringement-decisions/?refId=INFR\(2020\)2033](https://ec.europa.eu/implementing-eu-law/search-infringement-decisions/?refId=INFR(2020)2033) (accessed September 23, 2026).

³³ Ministry of Environment and Forests, Ordinul nr. 1540/2011 pentru aprobarea Instrucțiunilor privind termenele, modalitățile și epocile de recoltare, transport și depozitare a masei lemnoase [Order No. 1540/2011 approving the Instructions on timeframes, methods, and periods for timber harvesting, transport, and storage], Official Gazette of Romania (Monitorul Oficial al României), Ch. II, Sec. A, Art. 10¹, Para. (c)(3), 2011.

³⁴ Data shown in attributes' table of the forestry maps featured on the official timber traceability platform inspectorulpadurii.ro.

Greenpeace Romania investigators found that the following safety thresholds were disregarded:

- Heavy equipment carved deep tractor skid trails with exposed embankments over 2 meters high.
- Exposed to rainfall, these deep cuts have triggered soil erosion, permanently scarring the mountainside.
- There's no visual cue to indicate that suspended cable cranes were deployed on site.



Figures 6 & 7: The massive embankments and soil erosion from skidding in forestry parcel 37 of the Rusca Montană Natura 2000 site (ROSCI0219). Photo: Greenpeace Romania



Figure 8: Massive skid trail leading through the forest up to parcel 37 inside the Rusca Montană Natura 2000 site (ROSCI0219). Photo: Greenpeace Romania.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION & WATER SUPPLY CONTAMINATION

Evidence documented by Greenpeace Romania investigators strongly suggests that the logging operation also breached water protection laws by transforming the riverbed of Valea Alunului – a direct tributary of the Lozna River drinking water intake – into an active timber hauling highway. Greenpeace Romania investigators found a logging road leading right down to the river and found fuel and oil spills polluting the stream, together with other



Figures 9 & 10: One of the oil puddles on the Valea Alunului riverbed transformed into a logging road. Photo: Greenpeace Romania.

operational waste dumped in the area, including discarded forwarder tires, plastic bottles, and a half-full bottle of petrol at the time of the investigators field visit in June 2026.



Figures 11 & 12: Tire and plastic bottles left behind on parcel 37 of the clearcut Rusca Montană Natura 2000 site. Photo: Greenpeace Romania.

4.0 SUPPLY CHAIN LINKAGE: THE PIPELINE TO IKEA

The logging permit for parcel 37 was actively tracked through Romania's official **SUMAL timber traceability system** and cross-referenced with field investigations.

Informatii APV		
Număr APV: 2400162600390	UP: 1	Natura Produs: Principale codru
Ocol: OCOLUL SILVIC RUSCA MONTANA	UA: 37; 37	Fel Taiere / Tratament: T. progresive (racordare), împăduriri
Denumire APV: 70 ALUNU 2	Județ: CARAȘ-SEVERIN	Perioade de exploatare: de la 2025-10-09 pana la 2026-03-31
Stare APV: Predat	Volum inițial: 4419.88	
Grupă Specie		Volum
RĂȘINOASE		13.66
DIVERSE TARI		1284.32
FAG		3101.76
DIVERSE MOI		20.14
Total		4419.88

Informații Suplimentare	
Autorizație de exploatare	Titular: Foresta Cercănel S.R.L.
	Numar: A250016260101
	Emitent: Foresta Cercănel S.R.L.

Figure 13: Print screen from *inspectorulpadurii.ro*, the official Romanian timber tracking platform showing that this logging was done by Foresta Cercănel.

The commercial entity operating the logging site was Foresta Cercanel SRL. Public corporate records and physical surveillance confirmed that Foresta Cercanel SRL operates from the exact same address and utilizes the exact same timber depot as Colcear Servcom SRL — a well-established supplier of beech timber to Ikea's furniture manufacturer Masifpanel. Greenpeace Romania on-site investigations could not observe any separation of logs other than by species, size and quality. Timber from Parcel 37 hence appears to be mixed with logs

harvested from various other sites at this central depot. Masifpanel sourcing its raw wood from this depot means point-of-origin traceability is effectively lost. Timber from Parcel 37 is therefore most likely following the same route into core Ikea beechwood products manufactured by Masifpanel — specifically the SNIGLAR bed, SNIGLAR changing table, BEKVÄM step stool, RÖERT fork, STUBBARB leg, and KABBARP leg — placing consumers at risk of unknowingly purchasing products tied to high biodiversity forest destruction.

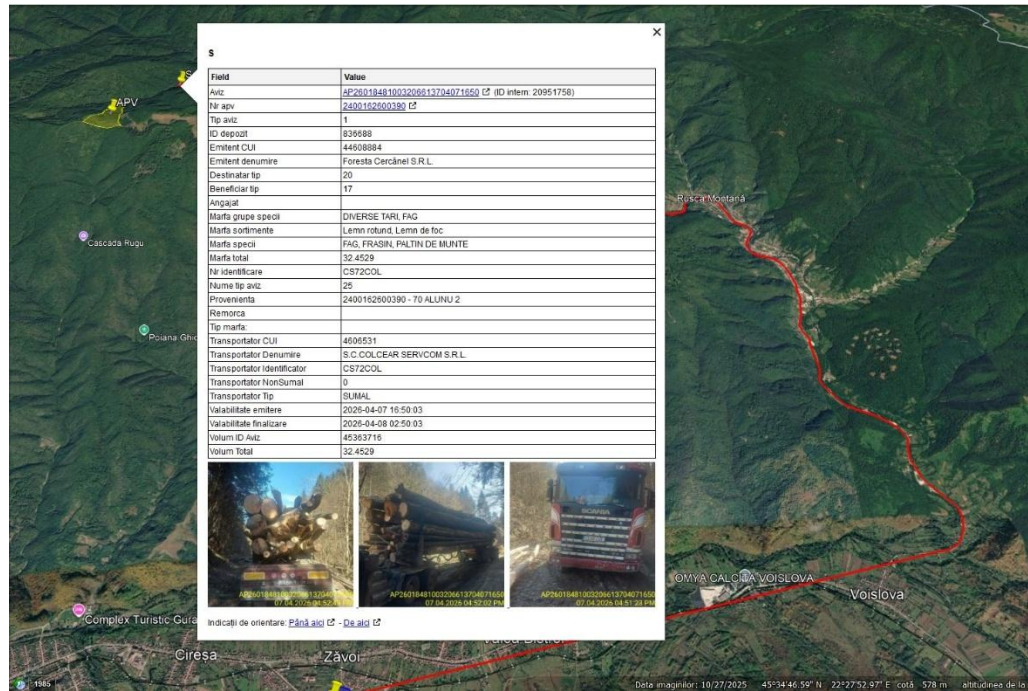


Figure 14: One of the transport permits and route linking the APV with Foresta Cercănel and Colcear Zăvoi. Source: inspectorulpadurii.ro

5.0 SYSTEMIC FAILURE AND CORPORATE GREENWASHING

The destruction in Rusca Montană is not an isolated incident; it is a clear symptom of a systemic failure where bureaucracy-driven delays in protection, voluntary corporate certification schemes, and internal tracking tools prove insufficient to prevent environmental destruction on the ground.

The logged area within the Rusca Montană forestry district is managed by the state-owned administrator, Romsilva who should have monitored and evaluated the logging operation's legal compliance. Romsilva holds a valid Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certificate³⁵, active until May 2028³⁶, and both Foresta Cercănel and Colcear Servcom SRL³⁷ are FSC certified.

From our investigation of the site, we believe that the FSC label completely failed to protect this high-biodiversity forest, proving once again that certifications can act as a greenwashing tool to reassure consumers rather than an effective barrier against destructive logging.

³⁵ Soil Association Certification, FSC Forest Management and Chain of Custody Certificate: RNP Romsilva – Direcția Silvică Caraș-Severin (Certificate Code: SA-FM/COC-006296, FSC License Code: FSC-C141263), Forest Stewardship Council, 2023. URL: <https://info.fsc.org> (accessed September 24, 2026).

³⁶ RNP Romsilva – Direcția Silvică Caraș-Severin, Certificat de Management Forestier FSC (Code FSC-C141263), Regia Națională a Pădurilor – Romsilva, 2026. URL: https://resita.rosilva.ro/articole/certificate_obtinite_p_1481.htm (accessed September 11, 2026).

³⁷ Foresta Cercănel SRL under licence FSC-185175, certificate code SA-COC-013699 and Colcear Servcom SRL under licence FSC-C126754, certificate code SA-COC-004813.

THE STRUCTURAL FLAW OF IKEA'S WOOD CONTROL SYSTEM

Ikea uses its own wood control system to screen its supply chain but does not track its biodiversity performance against a dated baseline on the grounds and claims that methods for measuring impacts, dependencies, and opportunities for nature “are still evolving”³⁸. This creates a major loophole: Ikea checks whether a forest is officially protected by law, not its real ecological value. Because formal government protection takes years to catch up with science, loggers can cut down rich ecosystems during this administrative delay. Ultimately, paper-based checks keep corporate auditing completely blind to real-world forest destruction.³⁹

This loophole is especially consequential in Romania, where the lack of political will, corruption in the forestry sector and rampant illegal logging⁴⁰ are major roadblocks in advancing conservation aims. Research published between 2018

³⁸ Inter IKEA Group, The IKEA Focus on Nature and Biodiversity: Our Commitment to Regenerating Resources, Protecting Ecosystems and Improving Biodiversity, Inter IKEA Systems B.V., Delft, 2024. URL: <https://www.ikea.com/global/en/our-business/sustainability/nature-agenda/> (accessed September 24, 2026).

³⁹ For Ikea's mandatory supply chain rules, Tier-1 compliance structures, and reliance on FSC Controlled Wood and HCVF parameters, see Inter IKEA Systems B.V., IWAY Standard: Forest Materials Section, Ed. 6.1, Inter IKEA Systems B.V., Delft, 2023, Requirements F 1.1–F 9.4. URL: https://www.ikea.com/ro/ro/files/pdf/b9/24/b924932d/iway-standard-forest-materials_en.pdf (accessed September 24, 2026). And Inter IKEA Group, Our Approach to Wood Sourcing: The IKEA Wood Control System, Inter IKEA Group, 2024. URL: <https://www.ikea.com/global/en/our-business/sustainability/wood-control-system/> (accessed September 24, 2026). Under the FSC framework, risk assessments evaluate threat levels against formal legal protection status rather than intrinsic ecological value. On the systemic lag between scientific identification of high-biodiversity habitats and formal state protection, see .M. Sabatini, S. Burrascano, W.S. Keeton, C. Levers, M. Lindner, et al., Where are Europe's last primary forests?, *Divers. Distrib.* 24 (10) (2018) 1426–1439. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ddi.12778>. For ground-level documentation of intermediate logging operators co-mingling un-designated high-biodiversity timber at shared sawmills feeding IKEA Tier-1 suppliers, see Greenpeace Central and Eastern Europe, Nature Crime File – Declassified: Assemble the Truth: Old-Growth Forest Destruction in the Romanian Carpathians, Greenpeace CEE, Vienna, 2024, pp. 8–16, 22–25. URL: <https://www.greenpeace.org/international/publication/66321/nature-crime-files-romania/> (accessed September 24, 2026).

⁴⁰ M. Goțiu, *STUDIU: Tăierile ilegale de păduri se mențin la un nivel uriaș în România. Dar implicarea civică le-a redus substanțial. Ce arată noul Inventar Forestier Național* [STUDY: Illegal logging remains at a huge level in Romania. But civic involvement reduced it substantially. What the new National Forest Inventory shows], *România Curată*, 2025. URL: <https://www.romaniacurata.ro/studiu-taierile-ilegale-de-paduri-se-mentin-la-un-nivel-urias-in-romania-dar-implicarea-civica-le-a-redus-substantial-ce-arata-noul-inventar-forestier-national/> (accessed September 11, 2026).

and 2023 had shown that across Europe the official process of mapping and protecting primary and old-growth forests is incomplete.⁴¹ In Romania out of the 1.9 million hectares of candidate sites (including forests) for strict protection under the 10% target of the EU Biodiversity Strategy, less than 600 000 hectares have been officially designated (including grasslands, waters etc.), while the rest of the areas have no precautionary principle applied, leaving them exposed to degradation as this investigation exemplifies.⁴²

5.0 THE RACE TO DEGRADE

The case study presented in this report is a textbook example of the systematic failure to implement the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 in Romania. Under the strategy, member states committed to strictly protecting at least 10% of their land areas, prioritizing remaining primary and old-growth forests.⁴³

Romania requested and received funding from the EU under its National Resilience and Recovery Plan (NRRP) to identify and designate these 10% strict protection zones.⁴⁴ However, while the contract with the Pro Biodiversitas S.R.L.

⁴¹ On the systemic mapping deficit and the delay in legally securing primary and old-growth forests across the EU, see J. Barredo, C. Brailescu, A. Teller, F.M. Sabatini, A. Mauri, K. Janouskova, Mapping and Assessment of Primary and Old-Growth Forests in Europe, EUR 30661 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2021, pp. 12–18. <https://doi.org/10.2760/797591> ; F.M. Sabatini, et al., European primary forest database v2.0, Sci. Data 8 (1) (2021) 220. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41597-021-00988-7>; and M. Mikoláš, G. Piovesan, A. Ahlström, D.C. Donato, R. Gloor, et al., Protect old-growth forests in Europe now, Science 380 (6644) (2023) 466. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.adh2303>.

⁴² Ministerul Mediului, Apelor și Pădurilor, Ordinul nr. 1.786/31.08.2026 privind aprobarea Catalogului național al zonelor prioritare pentru biodiversitate [Order No. 1,786/31.08.2026 approving the National Catalogue of Priority Areas for Biodiversity], MMAP, București, 2026. URL: <https://mmediu.ro/domenii/mediu/arii-naturale-protejate/zpb-pnrr-i3/rezultatele-proiectului/> (accessed September 24, 2026).

⁴³ European Commission, EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 – Bringing Nature Back into Our Lives, COM(2020) 380 final, European Commission, Brussels, 2020. URL: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0380> (accessed September 24, 2026).

⁴⁴ Council of the European Union, Council Implementing Decision on the approval of the assessment of the recovery and resilience plan for Romania, Document ST 12319/21 INIT, Annex, Component 11 ("Biodiversity and Environmental Protection"), Investment I3 &

Association was officially signed in 2023, the designation process has been constantly delayed and downgraded. The total eligible forest area slated for protection has shrunk from an initial 2.3 million hectares to under 0.6 million hectares proposed for protection in August 2026.⁴⁵

This specific forest in Rusca Montană was initially (March 2025) identified as part of the eligible 10% protection zone, but later on removed from the map officially submitted to the Ministry of Environment (August 2026). We can reasonably assume that this is due to the fact that it had been clearcut in the meantime. This case illustrates perfectly the need for a moratorium on identified areas, but so far the Ministry has refused to enact such a measure on the candidate sites. The predictable result is that these high-value forests are being aggressively logged before they can be legally protected.⁴⁶

The active resistance of the state forest administrator, Romsilva, to the 10% designation process as proven by the use of its veto right to block hundreds of thousands of hectares of forest from designation, evidently exposes the will to keep these forests into the economic circuit.⁴⁷ By clear-cutting these candidate

Milestone 34, Council of the European Union, Brussels, 2021, p. 41. URL: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-12319-2021-INIT/en/pdf> (accessed September 24, 2026).

⁴⁵ Ministerul Mediului, Apelor și Pădurilor, Ordinul nr. 1786/2026 privind aprobarea Catalogului național al zonelor prioritare pentru biodiversitate (ZPB) – etapa I [Order No. 1786/2026 approving the National Catalogue of Priority Areas for Biodiversity (ZPB) – Stage I], Monitorul Oficial al României, Partea I, Anexa 1, MMAP, București, 2026. URL: <https://mmediu.ro/domenii/mediu/arii-naturale-protejate/zpb-pnrr-i3/rezultatele-proiectului/> (accessed September 24, 2026).

⁴⁶ This investigation is the perfect example of how this works in practice. As shown above the elimination of the parcel was observed by comparing the two datasets. We can establish a plausible causality link between the date of the first dataset (March 2025), the logging period (October 2025 to March 2026) and the date of the second dataset (August 2026). See also: M. Mikoláš, G. Piovesan, A. Ahlström, D.C. Donato, R. Gloor, J. Hofmeister, W.S. Keeton, B. Muys, F.M. Sabatini, M. Svoboda, T. Kuemmerle, Protect old-growth forests in Europe now, *Science* 380 (6644) (2023) 466. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.adh2303>.

⁴⁷ According to *Guvernul României, Ordonanța de urgență nr. 25/2026 pentru modificarea și completarea Ordonanței de urgență a Guvernului nr. 57/2007 privind regimul ariilor naturale protejate, conservarea habitatelor naturale, a florei și faunei sălbatice* [Emergency Ordinance No. 25/2026 amending and supplementing Emergency Ordinance No. 57/2007 on the regime of protected natural areas, conservation of natural habitats, wild flora and fauna], *Monitorul Oficial al României, Partea I, București, 2026, Art. 40^8*. The designation of biodiversity priority areas (ZPB) - the Romanian legal transposition of strict protection zones - can be done only with the consent of the administrator of the area. For publicly owned forests, this is RNP Romsilva. This introduces a structural conflict of interest for RNP Romsilva, whose statutory self-financing mandate (HG 229/2009) relies on commercial timber harvesting, incentivizing the use of its administrative veto to protect logging yields over conservation targets. While the initial (July 2025 deliverable of the contract) forests proposed for protection within the

parcels now, Romsilva systematically destroys the ecological characteristics that qualify them for protection, keeping them locked in the commercial logging circuit to feed industrial wood suppliers.

Moreover, Greenpeace's Mapping Hub July 2026 analysis of the tree cover loss between 2001 and 2025⁴⁸ shows evidence of a predatory approach to logging in Natura 2000 sites which were also the primary focus for the 10% identification process. One could argue that the peak tree cover loss years are the ones when the conservation "threat" was manifesting: 2007 when Romania joined the EU and had to enact the Natura 2000 network, 2016 when the National Catalogue of Virgin and Quasivirgin Forests was officially established, 2020 when the EU Biodiversity Strategy including the 10% strict protection areas was established⁴⁹, 2023 when the 10% identification contract was signed by the Ministry and 2025 when the first final draft of the strict protection areas was circulated.

Consistently between 2007 and 2023, tree cover loss has noticeably shifted from ordinary woodlands more into Natura 2000 areas. Leaving the predatory logging interpretation aside, this is also the direct result of decades of illegal logging and poor forestry management, which have severely degraded Romania's woodland — leaving less than 10% of its forests over 120 years old.⁵⁰ This scarcity creates a dangerous clash: the few ancient forests that remain hold both the highest ecological value needed for nature protection and the highest biomass demanded by industry.

Romsilva administration were close to 700 000 hectares, the August 2026 official designation only included half this number.

⁴⁸ Greenpeace Nordic, 2026, The Missing Manual: What Ikea must do to Protect Europe's Forests.

⁴⁹ European Commission, EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 – Bringing Nature Back into Our Lives, COM(2020) 380 final, European Commission, Brussels, 2020. URL: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0380> (accessed September 24, 2026).

⁵⁰ INCDS „Marin Drăcea”, Inventarul Forestier Național (IFN): Rezultate Ciclul III [National Forest Inventory (NFI): Cycle III Results], Institutul Național de Cercetare-Dezvoltare în Silvicultură „Marin Drăcea”, Voluntari, 2025. URL: <https://roifn.ro/site/rezultate-ifn-3/> (accessed September 24, 2026).

Romania – TCL in Natura 2000 areas

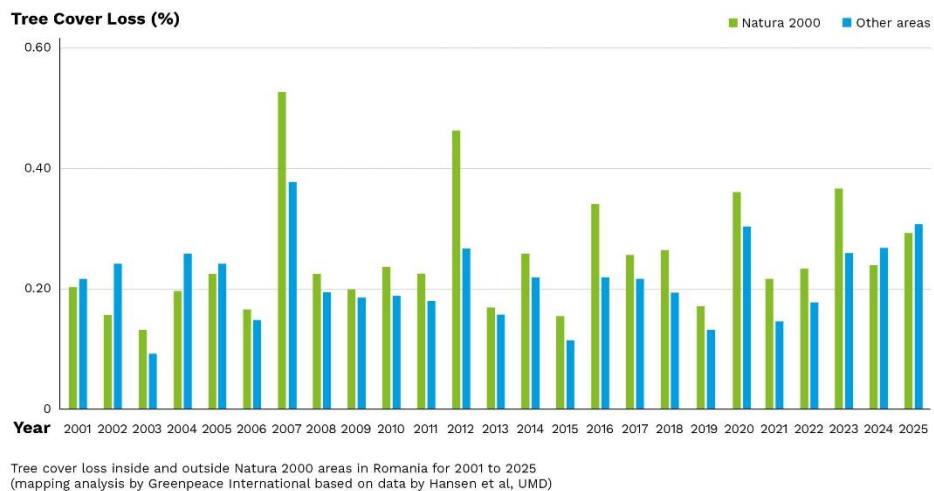


Figure 15: Greenpeace, Global Mapping Hub 2026. Natura 2000 tree cover loss 2001 - 2025. The Natura 2000 is the primary focus area for the 10% strict protection zones identification process.

Summary data file

Category	Data Point / Field	Investigative Case Details
General Info	Country & Region	Romania, Caraş-Severin County
	Name of Forest Area	Rusca Montană Forestry District, UP 1, u. a. 37
	Exact Coordinates	45.588935, 22.359408
Ecological Value	Forest Type	High Biodiversity Value Forest, Priority Habitat (including 91E0 Alluvial forest)
	Protection Status	Natura 2000 (ROSCI0219), Forestry Functional Category 5.Q
	Habitats types	9110 Luzulo-Fagetum beech forests 9130 Asperulo-Fagetum beech forests, 91V0 Dacian Beech forests 91E0 Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior
	Ecological Impact	Complete loss of habitat trees, frail regeneration, severe soil erosion, water contamination
Logging Details	Timeframe of Logging	October 2025 – March 2026
	Type of Logging	Overstory removal cut (de facto clear-cutting)
	Affected Timber Volume	4,174 cubic metres extracted (4,419.88 m³ approved)
Ikea Connection	Logging Company	Foresta Cercanel SRL
	Supplier Network	Colcear Servcom SRL (shared depot and address)
	Primary Evidence	SUMAL databases, ground team validation, drone and on-site photography
Systemic Failure	FSC Certification	Yes (SA-FM / COC-006296), managed by Romsilva
	Regulatory Loophole	Lack of logging moratoriums on NRRP mapped areas; enforcement failure

6.0 WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

The destruction of Rusca Montană shows how easily major corporations can hide behind empty green labels while benefiting from local regulatory gaps. To stop this destruction, the following measures must be implemented immediately:

- The Romanian Ministry of Environment must enact an immediate logging moratorium on all forest parcels identified by scientific bodies and NGOs as eligible for protection under Component 2 of the NRRP (Investment I.3), Service Contract No. 119 dated 16/08/2023), or under the official Catalogue of Virgin and Quasi-virgin forests, stopping the "race to degrade" by state and private operators.

Ikea must act to:

- Immediately suspend sourcing from proposed moratorium areas at a minimum until governments complete the designation processes required to deliver the EU 2030 Biodiversity Strategy's 30 per cent land protection targets, including 10 per cent strictly protected. The exemption in IWAY F9.3(b), which permits sourcing from Intact Forest Landscapes and High Conservation Value Forests where FSC-certified, should be removed.
- Adopt a Corporate Biodiversity Accountability Framework with measurable 2030 targets covering the entire supply chain, aligned with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the EU Biodiversity Strategy, and owned at board level rather than treated as a mere due diligence formality.
- Establish ecosystem integrity as a principle of Ikea's approach to governance, moving from monitoring forest cover to monitoring forest condition, with measurable indicators of composition, structure and ecological process, independent monitoring, and assessment of the effects of extraction on surrounding ecology.
- Publicly advocate for ambitious implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework and the EU Biodiversity Strategy, including effective protection of at least 30 per cent of discland and strict

protection of at least 10 per cent. Ikea should fully disclose its forest and biodiversity related lobbying positions, and advocate for the 2030 Forest Roadmap to recognise ecosystem integrity and forest degradation as measurable implementation outcomes.

IKEA'S REPLY TO THE INVESTIGATION

Ikea received this investigation prior to publication and in its right of reply, Inter Ikea Group requested that its position be reflected, asserting that logging in Parcel 37 was legally authorized under an approved management plan in a Natura 2000 zone, dismissing the photographic evidence as an unrepresentative snapshot, and committing its own experts to monitor site regeneration alongside FSC and local authorities—yet, in our opinion/view completely failing to address the documented operational breaches on the ground, including severe soil erosion, riverbed used as a haul road, and missing biodiversity trees and dead wood. Rather than applying the precautionary principle urged by Greenpeace Romania and suspending sourcing from forests identified for their high biodiversity value and potential, Ikea continued to rely on legal compliance and certification — and the consequences are now visible in Rusca Montană, where the clear-cut affecting more than a third of the area illustrate the very degradation Greenpeace Romania's demands sought to prevent.

ANNEX

INVESTIGATION METHODOLOGY SUMMARY

Site selection and field validation

Prior to digital tracking of the timber, the targeted logging parcel was identified through multi-criteria spatial screening focused on high-risk and high-biodiversity ecosystems. The selection was based on five parameters:

- location within the same Natura 2000 perimeter as our 2024–2025 investigations;

- average forest stand age of 170 years accounting for forest continuity over a long period of time;
- the presence of EU-protected habitats and species under the Habitats and Birds Directives;
- existence of the official "5Q" protective functional status;
- eligibility under the EU 10% strict protection target.

This ecological significance was contrasted against an approved logging permit (APV) authorizing an extraction quota exceeding 4,000 cubic meters.

Ground-truthing was completed across two field expeditions to the plot location, utilizing georeferenced high-resolution photography and video to document the logging site and parameters

Chain of custody

This investigation uses a four-stage chain-of-custody tracking methodology to trace timber from high-biodiversity value and potential forests logging sites to Ikea retail store shelves:

Digital timber tracking via SUMAL 2.0: Using Romania's public forest intelligence portal (Inspectorul Pădurii / SUMAL 2.0) to monitor active logging permits (APV), extraction volumes, and real-time transport permits (avize). Each transport is recorded using timestamped photo documentation, tree species, wood volumes, and GPS route data.

Intermediate depot geolocation: Because transport permits require continuous GPS tracking until final offloading, truck routes were mapped via the portal Inspectorul Pădurii from forest felling sites directly to regional log yards — specifically identifying the Foresta Cercanel depot in Zăvoi, Caraș-Severin County.

Secondary transport & sawmill tracing: Outbound transport permits were monitored again via the portal Inspectorul Pădurii from the Zăvoi depot to track the redistribution of logs to primary wood processing facilities, establishing the direct supply link to the Masifpanel mill in Însurăței (Gorj County).

Trade database cross-referencing: Direct supply chain linkages between Masifpanel S.R.L. and Ikea (Ikea Supply AG / Ingka Group) were confirmed using

Panjiva global customs and shipping data.⁵¹ These records established Masifpanel's unique Ikea Supplier ID, which was then used to identify finished wood products (e.g., the STUBBARP line) in Ikea retail stores across Europe.

⁵¹ S&P Global Market Intelligence, Panjiva Shipment Database (US Customs Data), S&P Global Market Intelligence, New York, 2026. URL: <https://panjiva.com/> (accessed multiple times in 2026).