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Illegal removals in the context of the sound use of wood
Session V

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Summary

From a legal perspective, illegal removals can be understood as logging which infringes criminal law (timber robbery) or administrative law (harvest regulation). Timber robberies diminish the owner's propensity for long term investments and increase the costs of forest management, whilst the infringements of harvest regulations signify often non sustainable forest practices (clear cuttings, logging of immature trees, logging in area reserved for nature protection, etc.). Moreover, illegally cut wood – being cheaper in the markets – competes on unfair terms with wood from sustainably managed forest, thus resulting in market failure.

The paper briefly reviews the definition of illegal removals and presents some data on the importance of illegal removals in selected ECE countries. The results of the study indicate that the known volume of illegally removed timber generally varies from one to five percent of the total volume harvested. However, in the case of private forests, illegal removals may reach up to 10 % of the total harvests. The paper approximates the economic losses due to illegal removals and describes how these losses are distributed between the main stakeholders of the forest sector.

Based on data and examples from selected ECE countries, the paper discusses under which conditions illegal removals may threaten forest conservation and how they may influence the efficient utilisation of forest resources.
