



Council of the
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DEVGEN 149
RELEX 757
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PROBA 33
FAO 29**

NOTE

From: Presidency
To: Delegations
Subject: Draft Council Conclusions on the new EU Forest Strategy for 2030

Delegations will find in annex a first draft of the Council Conclusions on the new EU Forest Strategy for 2030, which have been elaborated by the Presidency on the basis of the discussions in the Forestry Working Party on 3 September 2021 and the comments submitted some Member States. The draft Council Conclusions will be discussed at the next Working Party on Forestry on 17 September 2021.

Draft Council Conclusions on
The new EU Forest Strategy for 2030

The Council of the European Union

1. RECALLING the Council Conclusions of 10 November on
 - Perspectives for the EU forest-related policies and EU forest strategy post 2020 from 11th November 2020, and of 15 April 2019 on
 - the progress on the implementation of the EU Forest Strategy and on a new strategic framework for forests from April 2019
2. RECOGNIZING the role of the FOREST EUROPE ministerial process in developing dialog, principles and definitions, and RECALLING the Forest Europe Resolutions and Declarations, signed by all EU Member States and the European Commission on behalf of the European Union.
3. RECOGNIZING that Member States have national programs, tools, strategies and plans and CONSIDERING the role of Sustainable forest management as integral part of any Strategy.
4. RECOGNIZING that Sustainable forest management, as defined by FOREST EUROPE, is a dynamic process, providing a policy framework for balancing the provision of ecological, economic, and social functions of forests to contribute to these three dimensions of sustainable development.

5. **STRESSING** the importance of the sustainable forest management SFM in particular for protecting forest ecosystems, conserving biodiversity, ensuring carbon sink and storage, production of renewable materials, provision of livelihoods, development of bioeconomy, preventing desertification, enable water purification and soil erosion prevention. Forests are increasingly relevant from a climate perspective and for the protection of biodiversity, but the economic and social role is equally relevant.

Holistic approach and framework for forests

6. **NOTES** the new EU Forest Strategy for 2030, setting an increased ambition for the contribution of forests to the European Green Deal Objectives and the multiple services they should continue to provide. **SHARES** the view that the forest sector represents a corner stone in the EU's transition to a climate neutral, fair, just, resource efficient and competitive economy.
7. **REGRETS** the absence of strategic vision, objectives, clear definitions and actions in the new EU Forest Strategy and no clear steps in future action.
8. **NOTES** that the Strategy promotes the importance of wood-based products, especially long lived ones, at the same time **RECALLS** that the full potential of forests and of forest-based products, including short-lived ones, is not entirely utilised to better contribute to the climate goals and circular bioeconomy.
9. **RECOGNIZES** forests as provider of livelihoods, especially in rural areas and **REGRETS** the lack of socio-economic measures in the Strategy. **ENCOURAGES** the full involvement of forest owners and forest local communities in forest policy implementation and in delivering on the Strategy's objectives.

10. EMPHASISES the need to provide assistance, including financial mechanisms such as payments for ecosystem services and market-based tools, while reducing the administrative burden for forest owners and managers, as well as for public administrations.
11. STRESSES the need to further enhance multifunctional role of forests and for a balanced approach between all social, environmental and economic pillars of sustainability, as well as to mainstream sustainable forest management in other related sectorial policies.
12. DRAWS ATTENTION to the fact that a one-size fits all approach to sustainable forest management may prove counterproductive. EMPHASISES the need to recognise the diversity and specificities of forests among Member States, regions, forest ecosystems, management practices, cultural and historical developments. Indicators, thresholds or ranges for sustainable forest management should recognise the diversity of forest ecosystems, and take into account data availability, feasibility, reliability and the cost–benefit ratio.
13. EXPRESSES CONCERN in relation to the issue of Member States’ competence in forestry. REITERATES that although the EU has a variety of forest-related policies, the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU makes no reference to a common EU forest policy, the responsibility for forests lies with the Member States and all forest-related decisions and policies in the EU must respect the principle of subsidiarity and Member States’ competence in this field.
14. NOTES that a number of initiatives of the Strategy such as a legislative proposal for a Forest Observation, Reporting and Data Collection framework and Strategic Plans for Forests, seem to go in opposite directions and could potentially lead to an increase in cumbersome and ineffective regulations, and increased centralization, which may trigger an additional administrative burden and raises questions as to how it will respect and interact with the already existing European and national systems and tools.

15. **STRESSES** that several proposed actions in the Strategy depend on non-existing definitions such as primary and old growth forests. Existing definitions, developed in international and regional processes, should be used. Missing definitions and thresholds should recognise National Forest Inventories, forest ecosystems differences and should be developed in close cooperation and in fully transparency with Member States.
16. **RECOGNISES** the risks posed by forest fires, floods and other natural disturbances. **AGREES** that it is of utmost importance to strengthen the resilience of our forests. **CALLS** on the Commission to strengthen its work on the risk management related to natural disasters develop a structured and integrated approach.
17. **CALLS** for stronger cooperation on research and innovation to boost the use of wood in circular bioeconomy. **WELCOMES** the establishment of the research and innovation partnership on forestry.
18. **URGES** that the Standing Forestry Committee remains a forum for Member States to discuss and express views and to continue to play a key role in implementation of the EU Forest Strategy. Its composition should respect the national decision on participants of delegations.
19. **INVITES** the Commission to prepare a multiannual implementation plan together with the Standing Forestry Committee, while also ensuring inputs from other Commission groups.
20. **EXPRESSES** doubts on the need for new certification schemes and **RECALLS** that voluntary certification schemes for SFM already exist.
21. **EMPHASISE** the need to further promote SFM and to pursue such practices at global level in various international fora, such as the United Nations Forum on Forests, the FAO COFO, as well as in regional organisations like Forest Europe. **REGRETS** that the new EU Forest Strategy omits this international dimension.

Roadmap for planting 3 billion additional trees

22. NOTES the Roadmap for planting 3 billion additional trees in the EU by 2030. STRESSES that such planting must also recognise the need for keeping agricultural land. EMPHASISE that afforestation measures need to recognise potential losses of occurred and forgone income.
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