



EP Intergroup Climate Change,
Biodiversity & Sustainable Development

EU Green Deal ambitions: What do we want and need from EU forests?



#EUForestStrategy #EUBiodiversityStrategy #FitFor55 #GreenDeal

Wednesday 30 June 2021, 14:30 – 16:30 CEST

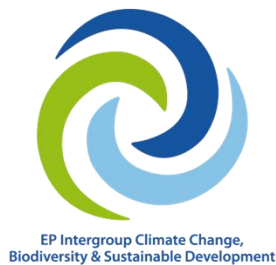
**High-level online event
hosted by MEP Elsi Katainen, MEP Simone Schmiedtbauer,**

*Co-chairs of the 'Sustainable Forest Management Working Group'
of the European Parliament Intergroup on 'Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development'*

and MEP Carmen Avram

More than 1/3 of Europe is covered by forests, providing a wealth of economic, environmental and social benefits for all Europeans. Europe's forests represent a great diversity of ecosystem formations determined by bio-geographic differences as well as various management approaches. In addition, EU forests are characterized by complex ownership structures and economic models broadly applied across the continent.

Sustainable and multifunctional forest management, as applied in European forests, aims to balance the various and sometimes conflicting sets of demands on forests, for the benefit of all. Forest management practices in Europe are adapted to diverse policy goals and social expectations.



Societal expectations towards forests have been rising over the last decades. Forests are expected to be among the key solutions to mitigate climate change, enhance biodiversity and contribute to the economic and social recovery in a context of COVID-19 crisis. Citizens also have higher expectations, including more wood-based products, clean water, clean air, tranquil and open forest recreational areas.

It is estimated that EU forests and the forest-based sector currently contribute to overall climate mitigation by absorbing about 13% of the EU's total emissions. However, climate change also has a significant impact on forests. Therefore, in order to maximize the potential of forests to regulate climate, they must be actively and professionally managed to make them "climate-fit."

Forests provide a home for biodiversity. About 50% of the Natura 2000 sites (37,5 million ha) are forests. SFM practices applied in European forestry clearly show that the ecological functions of forest ecosystems and biodiversity can be maintained in managed forests along with all other functions.

Forests and forest products function as a cornerstone of Europe's bioeconomy. They have a long history of providing a sustainable alternative to fossil-based materials and fossil energy, helping decouple economic growth from resource depletion and adverse environmental impacts.

The EU Green Deal of 2019 clearly shows that forest-related policy frameworks have strongly evolved along with others addressing climate ambitions, environmental challenges or economic and social issues and sustainable development. Also, the perception of general public, which is constantly and rapidly evolving due to the volatile environment of social media and other opinion-making industries, adds to the perception on how forests and their management are understood today. Lately, political signals regarding the role of forests in contributing to the EU's long-term objectives have somehow become contradictory. The EU forest-based sector needs clear and coherent political guidance on the EU's future forest-related policy.

The role of forests to contribute to a sustainable society must be better explained and recognized by both citizens and policymakers in order to have them well-reflected in future EU forest-related decisions.

Towards this end, the European Parliament Intergroup on 'Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development' will hold a high-level policy debate about EU forests and their management attended by decision-makers from the Member States, European Institutions and forestry scientists and researchers, to discuss how Europe's forests can help to accomplish the multiple ambitions of the European Green Deal.



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FINAL AGENDA

14:30 – 14:35 **Welcome remarks – Jo O'Hara**

14:35 – 14:45 **Opening remarks – MEP Elsi Katainen and MEP Simone Schmiedtbauer**

14:45 – 15:25 **Panel 1 – Forests for green growth and social cohesion**

Keynote speech: **Thomas Haußmann**, Head of the Liaison Unit Bonn of Forest Europe (10')

Panel discussion (30'):

- **Nuno Banza**, President, Institute for Nature Conservation and Forests (ICNF), Ministry of Agriculture, Portugal
- **David Kaimowitz**, Manager, Forestry Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- **MEP Emma Wiesner**
- **Thomas Haußmann**, Head of the Liaison Unit Bonn of Forest Europe

15:25 – 16:05 **Panel 2 – Forests for climate and nature**

Keynote speech: Profesor **Tudor Stancioiu**, Faculty of Silviculture and Forest Engineering, Transilvania University of Brasov (10')

Panel discussion (30'):

- **Marius Vaščega**, Head of Cabinet of the Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, European Commission
- **Jože Podgoršek**, Slovenian Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, and **Anton Harej**, State Secretary, Slovenian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food
- **MEP Elsi Katainen**
- Professor **Tudor Stancioiu**, Faculty of Silviculture and Forest Engineering, Transilvania University of Brasov

16:05 – 16:20 **Q&A session with the audience**

16:20 – 16:25 **Wrap-up – Jo O'Hara**

16:25 – 16:30 **Concluding remarks – MEP Carmen Avram**