



SUMMARY REPORT

The Review of the EU Forest Strategy: Fostering policy coherence on the multifunctional role of forests

4 December 2017

European Parliament, Brussels

Following the joint public hearing of the European Parliament's AGRI, ITRE and ENVI Committees on the EU Forest Strategy, policy-makers and stakeholders gathered to continue the discussion underlining concrete experiences from foresters and the importance of forestry in connecting, nature, people and the economy. The event was organised in collaboration with CEPF, EUSTAFOR, COPA-COGECA, and EFI.

Miapetra Kumpula-Natri MEP and Chair of the working group on "Bioeconomy" of the EP Intergroup on "Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development", welcomed participants by highlighting that more and more stakeholders are nowadays involved in forestry issues. The importance of bioeconomy was raised and the role that forestry plays in this perspective also stressing that not enough MEPs realise the important link between the sectors. The joint EP Committee Hearing as well as the follow-up discussion provided an opportunity to highlight the broader perspective and to engage the political parties further. The need for science and coherence on the issue was raised and the effort of the EP committees in engaging on the EU Forest Strategy was recognised.

Peter Mayer, Director of Austrian Research Centre for Forests outlined that important links are present between society, global megatrends and forests. Global megatrends include population growth, urbanisation, digitalisation, climate change, and consumer behaviour. It was said that demographic trends will clearly affect our decisions in the way that we use resources and adopt EU policies. The population is becoming healthier, lifespan is prolonged and this will have an effect on how Europeans shape their lives and interact with forests. Additionally, it was said that migration is a trend that has to be taken into account which is also linked with climate change and large population shifts. It was stated that the global population will rise to 11 billion in 2100, however the European population will represent only 5% due to the declining birth rate in Western societies. This was raised as of great concern as migration rates could increase thus accelerating the pressure on our societies and environment in the future. As for urbanisation, 70% of the global population is expected to live in cities by 2100. It was said however, that this can influence the attitude of citizens towards forests and nature, which could be an issue when discussing about development and the right political decisions to be made in a more urbanised society. Digitalisation is another important trend, which is developing rapidly and will play a role depending on how citizens use it. New technology (e.g. robots) could affect society and it is interesting to see which ethical questions will have to be addressed in the near future. Concerning resource and consumption, it was said that there is an increased competition for resources where for example forest land competes with agricultural land and vice versa. Additionally, it was stressed that consumption is unsustainable in the Western world calling for improvements in e.g. recycling, energy efficiency and bioeconomy. As for climate change, it is known that this could affect societies in the future and even today many of the problems in geopolitical terms (migration) are caused by it. The link between forests and the observed developments were also made. Digitalisation and technology can be



used, such as drones collecting data, to innovate the sector. Optimisation and resource efficiency were also raised as an important aspect when it comes to forests. In parallel, social sustainability should become more important in the future with the development of products focusing more on societal value (health and recreation). Moreover, some jobs will cease to exist but new green jobs will be created as a result of the new developments. Further, the link between these aspects and the EU Forest Strategy was referred to. It was highlighted that many policies deal with forests either directly or indirectly. Forests can be dealt with from different angles and policies and that has made it difficult to find consensus. It was said that no legally binding policy exist up to this day, target conflicts are not resolved and some policies dealing with forests are not well coordinated. It was stressed that this situation must be dealt with. Concerning the strategy, the speaker focused particularly on coordination and communication. Further, development and coherence of policies is essential. It was said that other governance approaches should be considered such as voluntary. For example, initiatives of countries to discuss policies of interest backed by the Commission on a voluntary basis have been done before (e.g. divorce law) and have shown to increase coherence. Additionally, countries can cooperate; form targets together, compare their progress, gradually understand their effectiveness and finally feed the process back to the Commission. This has been done before in the health sector and it is possible to increase coherence in this way. In conclusion, it was said that innovation has an important role to play in the future of forests, a new governance platform is the way forward and science will have to continue to play a central role in shaping informed decision making.

Ulrike Müller MEP and Chair moderated the panel debate also underlining that she herself is a forest owner in the alpine region where tourism is a major issue in relation to forestry. It was stressed that she therefore recognises and understands the work and struggles of owning a forest also underlining the importance of ensuring that foresters are involved in the discussion of the EU Forest Strategy. It was highlighted that she is committed to supporting sustainable forest management as well as supporting foresters in the regulations and directives related to forestry issues.

Natalie Hufnagl-Jovy, Senior Policy Advisor, Federation of German Forest Owner Associations, CEPF, is a forest owner herself and highlighted that ground tasks should be met in order to succeed in their forests activities. It was said that due to urbanisation, younger generations are no longer involved in forest management and a lot of people in Europe don't even know that they are themselves forest owners. It is challenging for forest owners to keep up with the new developments, and they are called to find ways to diversify in products and services. In respect to societal value products, an example was given were individual forest owners in Germany offer families their own family tree where they can gather for important family celebrations (e.g. weddings). There is also an increase of people's demand to be buried in forests. As for the strategy, it was said that the first strategy was subsidiarity oriented and focused on ownership; the 2013 strategy took a more centralised approach and less subsidiarity was given to the Member States. In the future, policy makers should be more flexible to incorporate the different aspects of sustainable forest management and put a clear signal to other policy sectors to acknowledge the multifunctional role of the forest sector.

Olof Johansson, Forest Policy Director Sveaskog, EUSTAFOR, pointed out that today the conditions are favourable for the forest sector due to the Paris agreement (COP21) and the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These developments lead to the appreciation of the multifunctionality of forests and this is something that has to be ensured. It was said that coherence and



consistency is wanted and there is a discussion whether this is the basis of policy development today. It was said that in order to achieve more coherence, all options have to be considered in terms of sustainability before coming to conclusions. This creates the demand for communication platforms because of the fact that sustainability is a dynamic concept which results from our values and knowledge. It was said that it is important for state forest management organisations to be part of this dialogue as they manage 30% of the EU forest area. Three examples followed showing the areas where the focus should lay in order to find solutions. Bioeconomy is one aspect, which provides increased opportunities for rural development and value creation. Climate is another important area which requires a broader perspective on the effects it has on forests. In addition, processes such as carbon storage, emission removal and carbon displacement should be looked at simultaneously. It was said that this will allow the development of the right Forest Strategy for Europeans now and above all for future generations. Finally, on the subject of biodiversity, it was said that the landscape approach should be considered. Different forest owners and managers should be involved, be provided support and be incentivised to apply conservation practices and promote biodiversity. It was concluded by stating that there seems to be disagreement on state of biodiversity and more is needed with regards to monitoring to establish trends.

Juha Hakkarainen, Vice-Chair Working Party on Forestry from COPA-COGECA, highlighted that forest owners are active in pushing the Forest Strategy and its adaptation forward. They, additionally, want and must be part of the review process as they play a pivotal role. Currently, there are 16 million forest owners across Europe which are producing valuable products and understand the importance of taking a holistic approach to the management of their forests. It was said that the Forest Strategy document is excellent but effective implementation is also needed. However, from our perspective the importance of the Strategy and its objectives was not enough taken into account in the preparation and discussions of important legislation for the sector. It was stressed that a more coherent approach and better coordination with all the relevant policies is needed to achieve that. From the forest owner point of view, it was said that investments to the forest industry are lacking. With regards to the ongoing bioeconomy review process it was said that the Bioeconomy Strategy should be well linked with the Forest Strategy. It was highlighted by Mr. Hakkarainen that he thinks that we have a great opportunity at EU level to increase even more the role of the EU Forest Strategy and the sector after 2020 by addressing and ensuring in a coherent manner synergies between various policies: future CAP and research and innovation policies, the revision of the Bioeconomy strategy, the implementation of Paris Agreement and SDGs. Finally, it was stated that there are clear mandates on climate and biodiversity but not for economical issues of forests, which are needed in order to develop the needed values.

The discussion among panellists and the audience highlighted that the forest sector in rural areas is undermanned, which is not mentioned enough. It was said that large companies bring jobs to the urban areas instead of supporting rural communities. The response of the panel indicated that this is true and that more attention should be given to training individuals to become skilful for the sector. Adding to that, it was said that the lack of working force is noticed primarily in Eastern Europe. It was said that it is very important to have well informed forest owners and managers to implement sustainable management and that the lack of attention on social sustainability is an issue. It was emphasised that the sector is now highly technological and that sometimes it is very difficult to illustrate its new developments. Another comment highlighted the hard wood sector and the difficulties they are facing. In addition, it was said that the forest sector is asked to fulfil many of the bioeconomy goals bringing



certain pressure to the sector. Further, the discussion highlighted that there is still a demand for low-value forest products, which is an issue to also further examine. It was also said that forest owners and managers should be considered as primary partners in the Strategy and not as a third party. Concerning the impact of regulations, it was said that the continuous changes lower the confidence in intergenerational property exchange reiterating that people might own a forest but not even be aware.

Andrzej Grzyb MEP and Chair concluded the meeting by underlining that the EU Forest Strategy is a good instrument but enhanced implementation is needed. For this, all relevant policy sectors should be taken into account to ensure coherent coordination of forest related policies. As society has high and diverse demands from forests and in meeting them resource efficiency and a daily contribution to rural and urban communities were highlighted are pivotal. Further, it was said that sustainable consumption should be promoted even though trade-offs are present. Research and innovation are needed to meet the demands effectively and competitiveness of the sector should be increased. It was concluded by underlining that the Strategy revision serves as a good opportunity to seek for policy coherence.