

Report to the Standing Forestry Committee

by the Standing Forestry Committee ad hoc Working Group VII

**contributing to the development of
a new EU Forest Strategy**

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS



Executive summary

Forests and other wooded land cover over 40% of the EU land area. Forests can contribute to rural development through healthy jobs with competitive incomes, while also offering wider society real benefits in terms of human health, recreation, tourism or other non-wood forest products and services as well as providing habitats for plants and animals, and protecting water and soil. Moreover, forests and the forest sector in general provide a great opportunity for moving the EU towards a green bio-based economy.

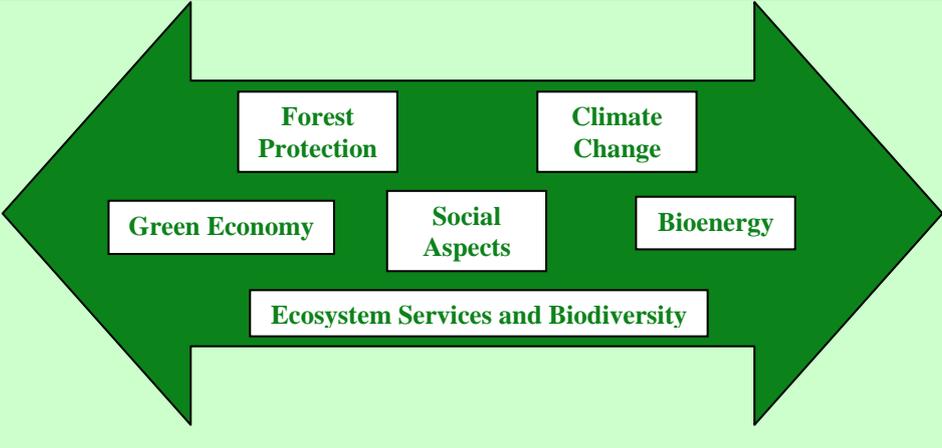
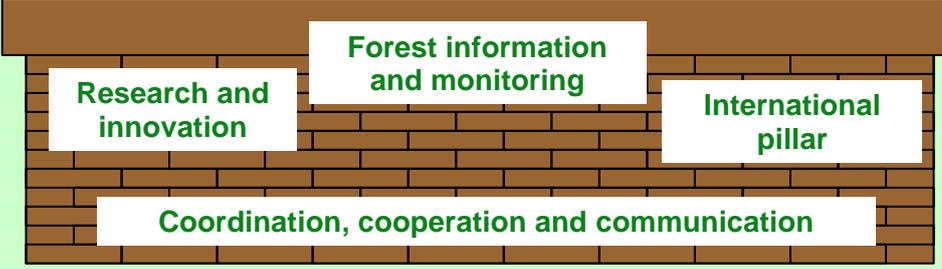
Taking into account the large societal and political changes over the last 15 years, the 1998 EU Forestry Strategy risks losing its relevance as a key reference for policy development related to forests in the European Union, unless significant emerging issues, and new challenges as well as a stronger implementation component are considered and addressed.

There is no provision for a common EU forest policy in the Treaty, and forestry remains a Member State competence. Nevertheless, forestry is a significant, and an essential element of several existing and developing EU policies, for example relating to rural development, climate, energy, water and soil etc. Building on subsidiarity, the new Forest Strategy must provide a strong framework that improves the coordination, cooperation and communication among the Member States, between the Member States and the Commission, within the Commission and with stakeholders, providing the contribution from the sector to Europe 2020 strategy and other 2020 targets. It should enshrine and promote the principles of sustainable forest management contributing to respond in a coherent and responsible way to the multiple opportunities and demands on forests.

In this regard, it is around a "Forest Package" that the EU is called to articulate its policy on the matter. Three documents will contribute to this effort of coherence and coordination:

- The "Forest Strategy" itself, as a holistic view of all related policies;
- An initiative on Forest Information and Monitoring.
- A communication on the wood-processing industry and related value chains which aims to address the challenges and opportunities of different value chains that have wood, wholly or partially, as a raw material, including construction;

As for the Forest Strategy, it should look ahead, but it should focus on key priorities over the next decade:

The Long-Term Vision	Long-term multifunctional and sustainable forestry and innovative forest sector that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fully contribute to Europe 2020 Strategy and other 2020 targets, - fulfil present and future social, economic and environmental needs, - support forest-related livelihoods 		
Forest 2020 Headline Target	By 2020 forests in the EU are demonstrably managed according to sustainable forest management principles, and thus; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - contribute to balancing the different forest functions and meeting demands; - provide a basis for forestry and the whole forest-based value chain to be competitive and viable contributors to the green economy. 		
Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ <u>Sustainable forest management (SFM) and multifunctional role of forests.</u> ⇒ <u>Continued provision of forest goods and services within the limits of what forests can sustainably supply.</u> ⇒ <u>Enhanced coordination</u> when preparing forest and forest sector related EU policies. 		
Outcomes	Smart and sustainable Growth Competitive, sustainable and innovative sector contributing to the growth of the EU economy.	Improving and protecting the environment A resource efficient EU, with high quality, robust and adaptable environment, ensuring biodiversity protection.	Rural development and the quality of life Enhanced rural livelihoods, improved health and well-being of people and their communities, and job opportunities throughout the forest value chain.
Key Themes			
Foundation Themes <i>Improving the knowledge base</i> <i>Fostering coordination & communication</i>			

Recommendations

The New EU Forest Strategy:

A. Should aim to achieve the **VISION** "long-term multifunctional and sustainable forestry and innovative forest sector that:

- fully contributes to Europe 2020 Strategy and other 2020 targets,
- fulfils present and future social, economic and environmental needs,
- supports forest-related livelihoods"

B. The **MISSION** of the EU Forest Strategy should be "to underpin well-coordinated and coherent forest-related policies at EU, international and national levels, and the conditions necessary for safeguarding and enhancing the sustainable management and use of forests and their multiple goods and services."

C. Should have as a **HEADLINE TARGET** that **by 2020 forests in the EU are demonstrably managed according to sustainable forest management principles**, and thus:

- contribute to balancing the different forest functions and meeting demands,
- provide a basis for forestry and the whole forest-based value chain to be competitive and viable contributors to the green economy.

1. Should affirm the **EU commitment to the principles of sustainable forest management (SFM) as defined by Forest Europe**, and enshrine and promote these principles in the management of all forests in the EU.

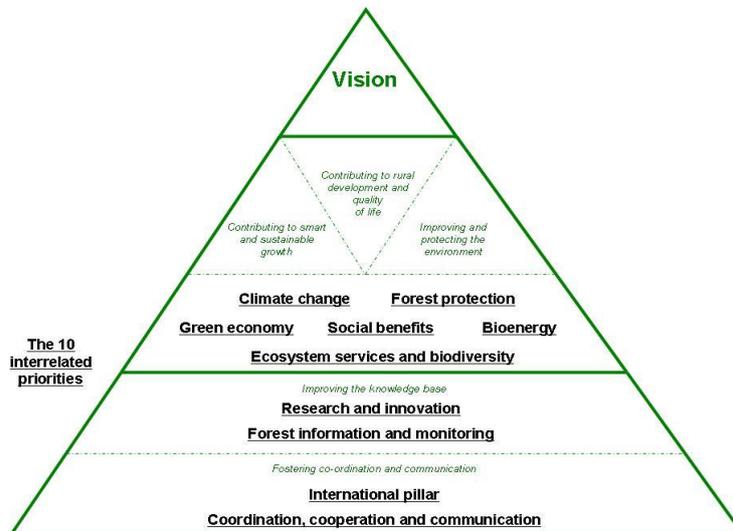
2. Must provide a **strong and coherent strategic framework** with modalities or mechanisms that improve the **coordination, cooperation and communication** among the Member States, between the Member States and the Commission, within the Commission as well as with stakeholders and other interested parties and facilitating further involvement of stakeholders in the decision process.

3. Should enable EU forests, and assist the EU forest sector, to provide **sustainable solutions to emerging challenges and to sustainably manage the multiple demands** on and expectations of forests taking into account differing local and national circumstances.

4. Should be a **voluntary instrument, building on subsidiarity**, including agreed lines of added value at the EU level with Member States (policy guidance on certain specified topics and for actions) and **identifying other areas where some Member States would like to advance further**, such as: regional /cross-regional cooperation; climate change adaptation and mitigation; forest health; valuation of ecosystem services; forest biodiversity, forest information and monitoring; forest fire, production and mobilisation of wood material from sustainable managed forests, promotion of wood based products and constructing with wood¹ as part of the green economy, afforestation.

5. Should address **ten interrelated priorities** identified in the following **framework/diagram**:

¹ These products and related industries will be developed in the document on Forest-based industries



6. Should recommend that within one year a **Forest Action Plan/Framework** that sets out specific actions for implementing the strategy, monitoring and reporting mechanisms is developed. This may include consideration of some targets to be further specified. The strategy should also facilitate immediate action on the following topics:

- Improving forest information and monitoring
- Encouraging the efficient use of sustainably produced wood
- Ensuring coherence between different sustainability requirements in order to have a level playing field for different materials and uses
- Assessing the demand for wood, and what forests can sustainably supply, up to 2020 and beyond and the possible contribution from EU resources.

7. Should ensure coherence between EU's internal and external policies related or affecting forests and support the negotiation of a **Legally Binding Agreement on forests** in Europe, facilitating its entry into force and implementation in the EU, if successful.

8. Should enable **improved and more coordinated use of existing resources** (such as Rural Development regulation, Life+, research and innovation Horizon 2020, development cooperation, etc) and stimulate new and innovative financing of tools for forest sector at national and EU levels to support the implementation of the strategy.

9. The members of the Working Group consider that, in order to achieve the goals, the Strategy should be **adopted at the highest political level** (recommendation addressed also to Council and Parliament).

10. The Working Group recommends that the strategy is called "**the EU Forest Strategy**" and the following **immediate steps** for the Commission to follow:

- forward the Working Group report to the Standing Forestry Committee for its consideration;
- prepare the new EU Forest Strategy as part of a "Forest Package" for the consideration of the Council and the Parliament by the first half of 2013, in a coherent way including an initiative on forest information and monitoring, the evaluation of the Forest Action Plan and a communication on the wood-processing industry and related value chains;
- continue wide-range communication, public consultations and inputs to the new EU Forest Strategy under preparation, including the Advisory Group on Forestry&Cork and where appropriate the Advisory Committee on Forestry and Forest-based Industries.