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MANAGING STATE  
FORESTS RESPONSIBLY



## **EUROPEAN STATE FORESTS 2024+ MANAGING FORESTS RESPONSIBLY FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET**

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## EUROPEAN STATE FORESTS 2024+ FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET

Forests are multifunctional, offering European citizens a rich variety of amenities, products, and services. Forests support the development of a fossil free Europe and a transition towards a strong bio-based circular economy. Through carbon sequestration, storage and substitution, forests and their products contribute to mitigation of climate change and are valued for their diverse ecosystems. They are a place for recreation, culture and heritage, and provide employment, particularly in rural areas

**A study of 30 European states shows that 7% of the total share of economic output and 1 in every 16 jobs is, directly or indirectly, generated by the forestry and wood industries<sup>1</sup>. About 50% of the Natura 2000 sites are forests and other wooded land<sup>2</sup>, of which 8.4 million hectares are situated in state forests and managed by EUSTAFOR Members<sup>3</sup>.**

One third of Europe's forests are publicly owned, which means that they belong to the citizens of Europe. These forests are managed by State Forest Management Organizations (SFMOs) committed to practice Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) to the highest standards and with a long-term view. Forests are not the same across Europe. The challenges facing our forests are varied and therefore forest policy objectives must be addressed at national level to ensure we maintain forests as a growing and resilient resource across Europe.

The European State Forest Association (EUSTAFOR) is proposing actions for forests and their sustainable management for the incoming European Parliament and the future European Commission, as well as the Council, as co-legislators. We hope the EU Institutions will take a holistic approach to forests; engage with forestry experts in Member States and foster their multifunctional expertise in the development of forest-related policies for the coming years.

1. ECONMOVE (2023): The Economic impact of the Forestry and Wood Industry in Europe in terms of the Bioeconomy
2. Natura 2000 Management in European State Forests (2013/2019)
3. Internal EUSTAFOR Database (2023)

# CALL FOR ACTION

EUSTAFOR Members call upon the new European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament to support the development of European forests and forestry through the following key proposals:



## 1 We need resilient, well-managed, multifunctional forests, supported by adaptable national policies to deal with the challenges of climate change.

Proactive forest management needs to be encouraged to help forests adapt to change and to keep forest damage (such as those caused by storms, pests, and forest fires) under control. Whilst preparedness, prevention and certain eradication actions can be coordinated at EU level, detailed regulation of forest management should be left at the national level supporting the no-one-size-fits-all principle.

European policy makers should ensure they continue to support the SFM practices, based on long-term forest management plans and supported by research in areas which help address the climate challenges in Forests.

## 2 The EU needs to seize the benefits of innovation and growth of the bioeconomy.

Healthy, resilient and multifunctional forests cannot be achieved without investments in silviculture and a thriving bioeconomy is what makes these investments possible. Hence, there is an urgent need for the 2018 Bioeconomy Strategy to be updated. Forests are the source of both wood and non-wood products. Wood offers many possibilities to substitute fossil raw materials and should be a centrepiece of the strengthened EU Bioeconomy Strategy. The strategy needs to also focus on research and innovation of bioeconomy products, which should be developed as part of the forthcoming EU Research and Innovation Policy. European policy makers should secure the success of the bioeconomy by ensuring that the future EU regulations, such as those on cascading use, do not inhibit the development of new value chains, economic growth and green jobs.







Vasja Marinč, SIDG

**3 Acknowledge that biodiversity protection is embedded in the long-term sustainable forest management by SFMOs across Europe.**

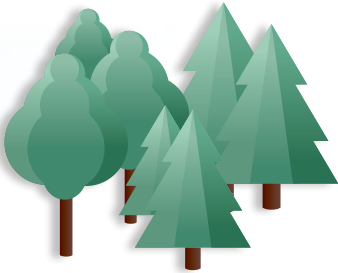
SFMOs in Europe manage long-term sustainable ecosystems, embedding biodiversity protection. These forests provide amenities and rich habitats, and are enjoyed by citizens across the EU. For many years, EUSTAFOR Members have been implementing nature-driven practices. Recognition should be given to State forests, the majority of which are certified to high standards and aligned with the EU Biodiversity Strategy. The SFMOs offer expertise and opportunities to develop and apply best practices in biodiversity protection, which should be utilized.

**4 Sound forest-related policymaking requires forest expertise to be at the heart of policy formulation.**

Forest expertise should be central to forest-related policymaking. The new EU Forest Governance Structure should focus on policy through the Standing Forestry Committee and enhanced stakeholder engagement via the Forestry Stakeholders Platform. SFMOs' knowledge of European forests should drive EU forest-related policy development and implementation.



Aino Jylhälehto, Metsähallitus



# OUR VISION FOR EUROPEAN FORESTS

- I Europe's forests need to retain their multifunctional purpose:** The functions of forests are manifold and the same forest area often provides a mix of products and services. Forests are habitats for flora and fauna, providing a high degree of biodiversity. The harvesting, processing and use of wood as well as non-wood products (cork, resins, gums, wild mushrooms, aromatic and medicinal plants, wild nuts and berries) from forests contribute to rural development and green jobs. Trees also absorb CO<sub>2</sub> and mitigate the effects of climate change

*The annual increment of wood in forests managed by EUSTAFOR Members is circa 240 million m<sup>3</sup>, and around 100,000 employees provide their expertise and experience – now and in the future – to ensure forests for nature, for climate, for wood and for people.<sup>4</sup>*

- II Resilient forests contribute to a more sustainable future:** Active and nature-based forest management supports the adaptation to climate change and keeps forest damage, such as those caused by storms, pests, and forest fires under control. Forest resilience is the precondition to ensure that forestry contributes to the green transition and to achieve the global Sustainable Development Goals, which must be supported by well-designed EU strategies and financial instruments. Only healthy and thriving forests can efficiently provide their multifunctional benefits to society at large.

*Climate change has had a significant impact on forests already with damage to 1.2 million hectares of European forests from fires, pests, and diseases only in the period 2018-2019.<sup>5</sup>*

- III Forests and forest products reduce fossil emissions and function as a cornerstone of Europe's bioeconomy:** Trees sequester carbon, which is stored in forests and in forest products. As long as forests are managed sustainably, the overall CO<sub>2</sub> balance on a landscape scale will be positive. EUSTAFOR Members wish to contribute in building a resource efficient and green European economy. Forests provide a local alternative to fossil raw materials in construction, in bioenergy and also in medicine and food production.

*EUSTAFOR Members harvest around 1/3 of the 400 million m<sup>3</sup> timber logged annually in the EU, supporting the bioeconomy in construction, innovation and the energy sector, where bioenergy currently makes up 60% of the EU's total renewable energy production.*

- IV Forest management actively contributes to maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity:** Europe's state forests offer the most biodiversity-rich habitats in Europe, providing a home to many rare and threatened creatures and to thousands of different birds, mammals, insects, and plant species. Management practices applied in state forests clearly show that the ecological functions of forest ecosystems and biodiversity can be maintained in managed forests along with all other functions.

*About 16 million hectares of state forests in Europe provide benefits resulting from their protected status whereas another 9.5 million ha fulfil various protective functions.<sup>6</sup>*

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4. Internal EUSTAFOR Database (2023)

5. Internal EUSTAFOR survey (2020)

6. Internal EUSTAFOR Database (2023)



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EUSTAFOR Members uphold SFM principles through three pillars:

- 1 Economic value:** Our timber yield contributes to the bioeconomy in construction, innovation and to the energy sector, where bioenergy currently represents more than half of the EU's total consumption of renewables.
- 2 Environmental value:** Leading in ecologically sound silvicultural methods, we support biodiversity, protect endangered species and preserve natural processes.
- 3 Social value:** We create and maintain public recreational areas, preserve scenic and culturally valuable landscapes and enable foraging, hunting and fishing.



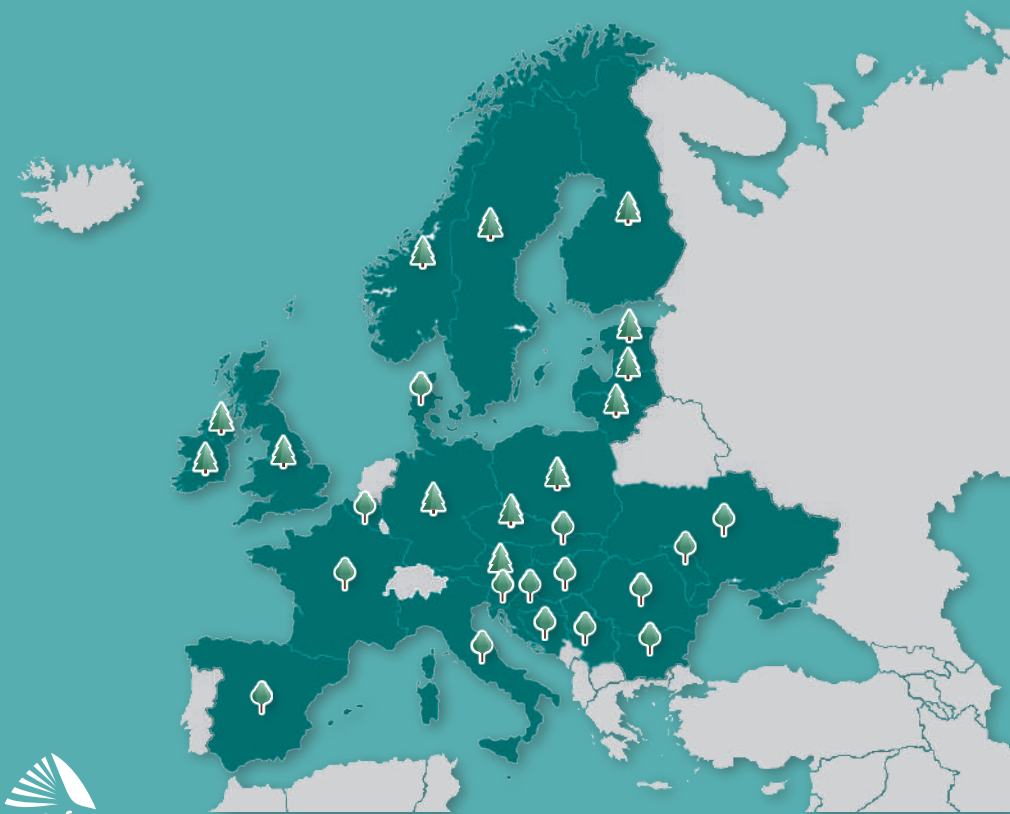
# WHO ARE WE?

EUSTAFOR represents 39 members in 27 European countries, sustainably managing over 60 million hectares of state-owned land, including 54 million hectares of forests.<sup>7</sup>

EUSTAFOR Members endorse the principles of SFM developed by FOREST EUROPE<sup>8</sup> as well as the objectives and guiding principles of the EU Forest Strategy. Our members facilitate recreation, preserve cultural heritage and excel in nature conservation. Through collaboration and knowledge exchange between countries and regions we strive to raise our standards every day. Serving as a forum for European SFMOs, EUSTAFOR promotes the positive impact of state forest management on society, aligning with and aiming to reach European sustainability goals.

7. Internal EUSTAFOR Database (2023)

8. Helsinki Resolution H1



## European State Forest Association AISBL

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