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MANAGING STATE
FORESTS RESPONSIBLY

LET'S BUILD A FUTURE-FIT EUROPE TOGETHER!

European state forests sharing the mission of the Green Deal ⁽¹⁾ for climate neutrality, biodiversity and a growing circular bioeconomy

www.eustafor.eu

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DEAR EUROPEAN POLICYMAKERS,

In your new positions as European policy and decisionmakers, we wish to welcome you to Europe's most diverse natural resource: forests.

More than 1/3 of Europe is covered by forests, providing a wealth of economic, environmental and social benefits for all Europeans. Up to 1/3 of Europe's forests are owned by states, which means that they belong to the citizens of Europe. As managers of these common European assets, we want to share with you our vision of how sustainable and multi-purpose forestry can ensure all state forests will flourish for centuries to come while serving people, climate and nature.



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STATE FOREST
MANAGEMENT
ORGANIZATIONS

100 000

FOREST PROFESSIONALS
FROM 24 COUNTRIES
THROUGHOUT EUROPE

49 million

HECTARES OF EUROPEAN
FORESTS AND OTHER
WOODED LANDS

EUROPEAN STATE FOREST ASSOCIATION (EUSTAFOR)

believes that the following key issues deserve your attention when developing new policies and legislation to support the future European Green Deal:



1 Sustainable and multi-purpose forestry is a pan-European story

Forest management practices are adapted to diverse policy goals and social expectations. In forests close to cities, forest managers pay attention to the need for recreation areas whereas, in forests with very high diversity and rare species, conservation is especially important. Other forests are valued for their high productivity or their role in controlling erosion. The main focus of a forest's function does not mean that other essential functions are neglected. Sustainable and multifunctional forest management, as applied in European state forests, aims to balance the complex and sometimes conflicting sets of demands on forests, for the benefit of all.

2 Climate-fit Europe means not only mitigation, but also adaptation

It is estimated that EU forests and the forest-based sector currently contribute to the overall climate mitigation by absorbing about 13% of the EU's total emissions⁽²⁾. In order to maximize the potential of forests to regulate climate, they must be actively and professionally managed to make them "climate-fit". Sustainable forest management improves the ability of forests to maintain and enhance carbon sinks and stocks, including by transferring carbon to wood products⁽³⁾. Sustainable forest management aimed at providing biomass, timber, non-wood resources and other ecosystem functions and services, can lower GHG emissions and can contribute to adaptation.

However, climate change also has a significant impact on forests. A case in point is the recent severe damage in 1,2 million hectares of European forests resulting from extreme weather and climate events, followed by pests and diseases, throughout Europe. Our members report that over 36 million m³ of wood have been lost and recovery will require additional workforce and funding of up to 800 million EUR, presenting both logistical and financial challenges for many state forest organizations. Well-designed EU strategies and financial instruments are needed more than ever! Only healthy and thriving forests can efficiently provide climate-related services.

3 A home for biodiversity

Forests provide a home for thousands of bird, mammal, insect, and plant species. About 50% of the Natura 2000 sites (37,5 million hectares)⁽⁴⁾ are forests, of which 8 million hectares are situated in state forests. An additional 16 million hectares of state forests provide benefits resulting from their protected or protective status. Management practices applied in state forestry clearly show that the ecological functions of forest ecosystems and biodiversity can be maintained in managed forests along with all other functions. In fact, forest management is not only compatible with the conservation of biodiversity but, in most cases, actively contributes to its maintenance and enhancement.

4 Use wood! Boost the bioeconomy! Defossilize Europe!

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. Wood is the most commonly used renewable construction material. Advanced engineering is enabling architects to build better, bigger and higher with timber. New wood fiber-based materials are also being used in a range of manufacturing sectors, while renewable wood-based fuels continue to evolve⁽⁵⁾. This shows European forests, their products and services, are integral to achieving the goals set out by the Bioeconomy Strategy⁽⁶⁾ and the European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate-neutral economy by 2050⁽⁷⁾.

EUSTAFOR is deeply convinced that the main tool to integrate European forests and the forest-based sector into the Green Deal should be a robust EU Forest Strategy post-2020, as it provides a framework for a consistent and well-coordinated action at EU level.

Furthermore, we would like the relevance of state forests for the broad spectrum of issues mentioned above to be recognized in your future decisions. The future of European forests – with their long life cycle – depends on the political and managerial decisions that are made today. With our knowledge and expertise, we believe we can actively contribute to a comprehensive understanding of how Europe's forests can help to accomplish the multiple ambitions of the European Green Deal.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that forests are developed and managed wisely, for the benefit of all.

Sincerely,



Reinhardt Neft
President of EUSTAFOR

¹ von der Leyen, U. (2019). [A Union that strives for more. My agenda for Europe](#). European Commission.

^{2,3} Nabuurs, G. J. et al. (2015). [A new role for forests and the forest sector in the EU post-2020 climate targets. From Science to Policy 2](#). European Forest Institute.

⁴ European Commission. (2015). [Natura 2000 and Forests. Part I-II, p. 39](#)

⁵ CEI-Bois. (2019). Wood. Building the Bio-economy.

⁶ European Commission. (2018, October). [A sustainable bioeconomy for Europe: strengthening the connection between economy, society and the environment](#)

⁷ European Commission. (2018, November 28). [A Clean Planet for all: A European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy](#).

EUSTAFOR

A STRONG VOICE FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND USE OF FOREST RESOURCES

The European State Forest Association (EUSTAFOR) is recognized as a strong and well-coordinated voice of European state forest management organizations at EU and pan-European levels.

EUSTAFOR member organizations provide valuable, professional and experience-based knowledge about the sustainable and multifunctional management of state-owned forests in order to support European forestry-relevant policy objectives.

As a forum for European state forest management organizations, EUSTAFOR advocates the positive results of the management of state forests as their contribution to society, particularly in terms of achieving Europe's sustainability strategies.



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