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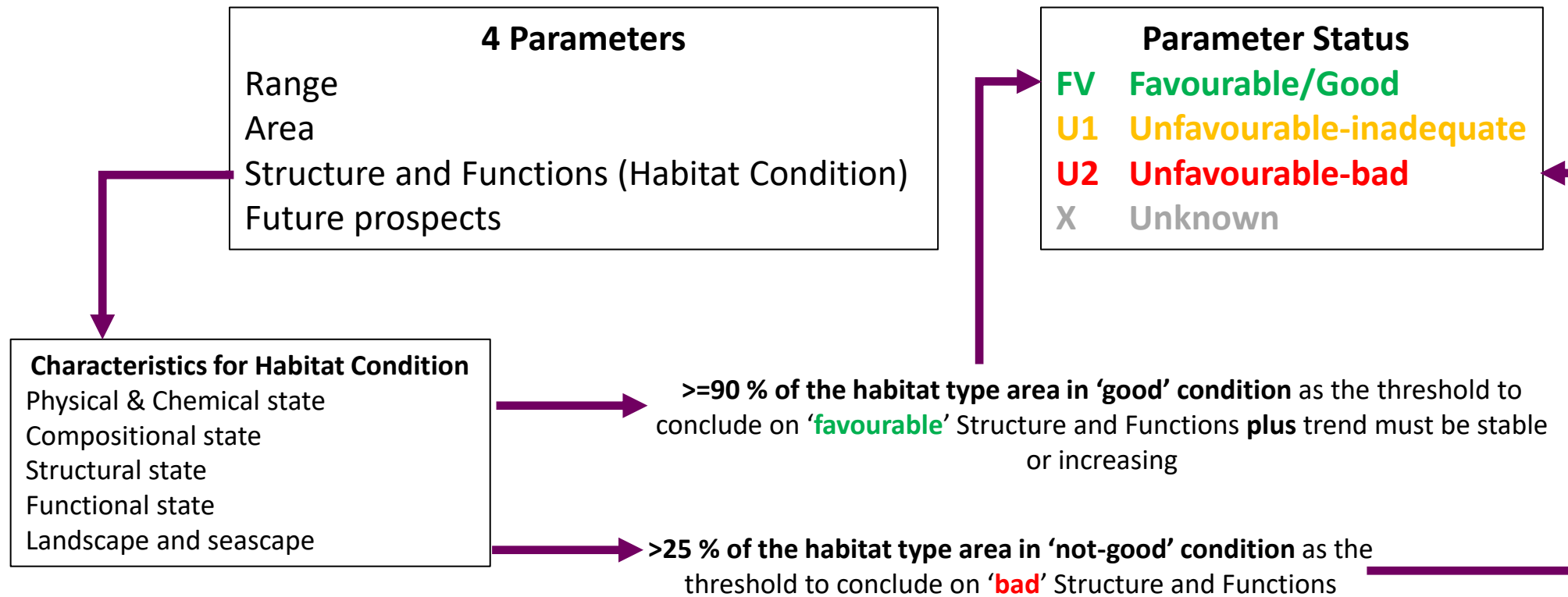
# Comments on the Assessment of the Conservation Status of (Forest) Habitats in the EU

European Forestry House Round Table, 10 October 2023

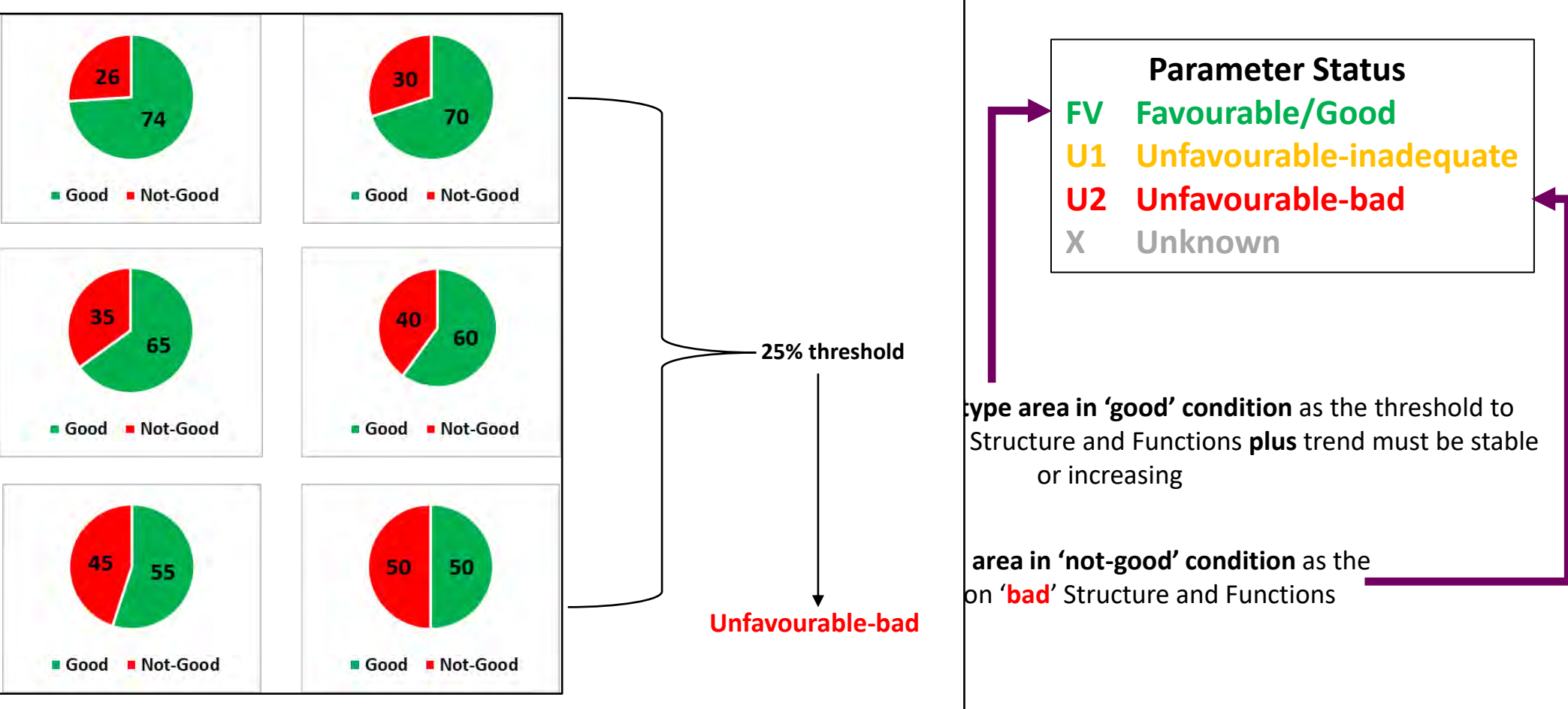
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EFI Liaison Office Brussels

# Assessment of the Conservation Status of a (Forest) Habitat Type in a Biogeographical Region



# Assessment of the Conservation Status of a (Forest) Habitat Type in a Biogeographical Region



# Conservation Status of Habitats - Rules for combining the 4 Parameter Statuses

Range		Area		Structure and Functions		Future Prospects	
FV	Favourable/Good	FV	Favourable/Good	FV	Favourable/Good	FV	Favourable/Good
U1	Unfavourable-inadequate	U1	Unfavourable-inadequate	U1	Unfavourable-inadequate	U1	Unfavourable-inadequate
U2	Unfavourable-bad	U2	Unfavourable-bad	U2	Unfavourable-bad	U2	Unfavourable-bad
X	Unknown	X	Unknown	X	Unknown	X	Unknown

Conservation Status is ...	if the 4 Parameters are .....
FV Favourable/Good	all favourable OR three favourable and one unknown
U1 Unfavourable-inadequate	one or more inadequate BUT no bad
U2 Unfavourable-bad	one or more bad
X Unknown	two or more unknown combined with favourable OR all unknown

# Parameter Combinations and resulting Conservation Status

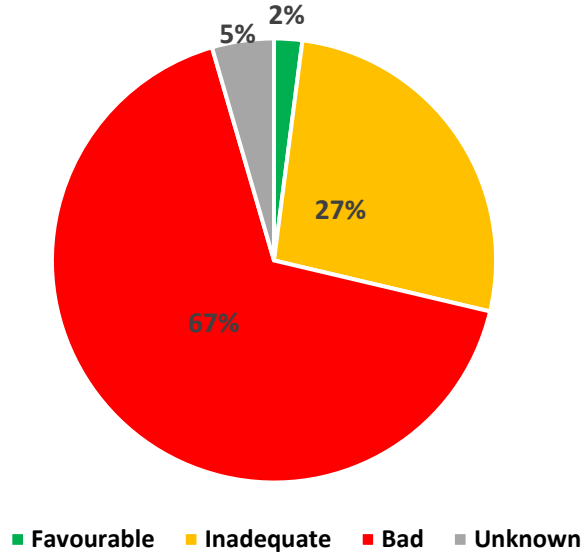
Conservation Status Favourable			
Range	Area	Condition	Future prospects
FV	FV	FV	FV
X	FV	FV	FV
FV	X	FV	FV
FV	FV	X	FV
FV	FV	FV	X

Conservation Status Unfavourable-bad			
Range	Area	Condition	Future prospects
FV	FV	FV	U2
FV	FV	U2	FV
FV	U2	FV	FV
U2	FV	FV	FV
FV	FV	U2	U2
FV	U2	FV	U2
FV	U2	U2	FV
U2	U2	FV	FV
U2	FV	FV	U2
U2	FV	U2	FV
FV	U2	U2	U2
U2	U2	U2	U2

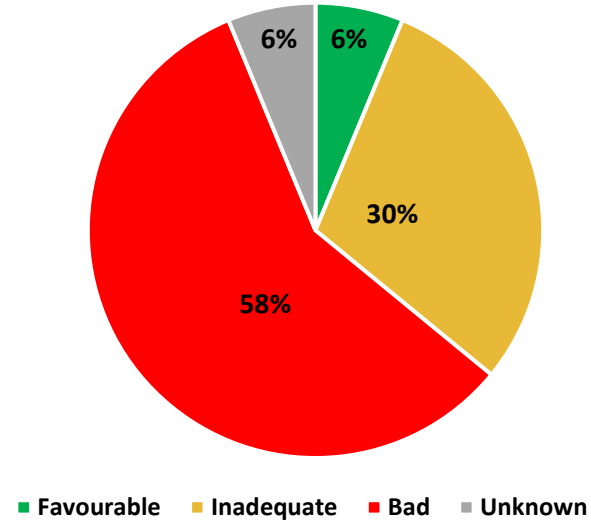


# Parameter Combinations and resulting Conservation Status - Summary

All Cases



Condition = Favourable



Range	Area	Conservation Status			
		Favourable	Inadequate	Bad	Unknown
X					
Y					
Z					
W					
V					
U					
T					
S					
R					
Q					
P					
O					
N					
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C					
B					
A					

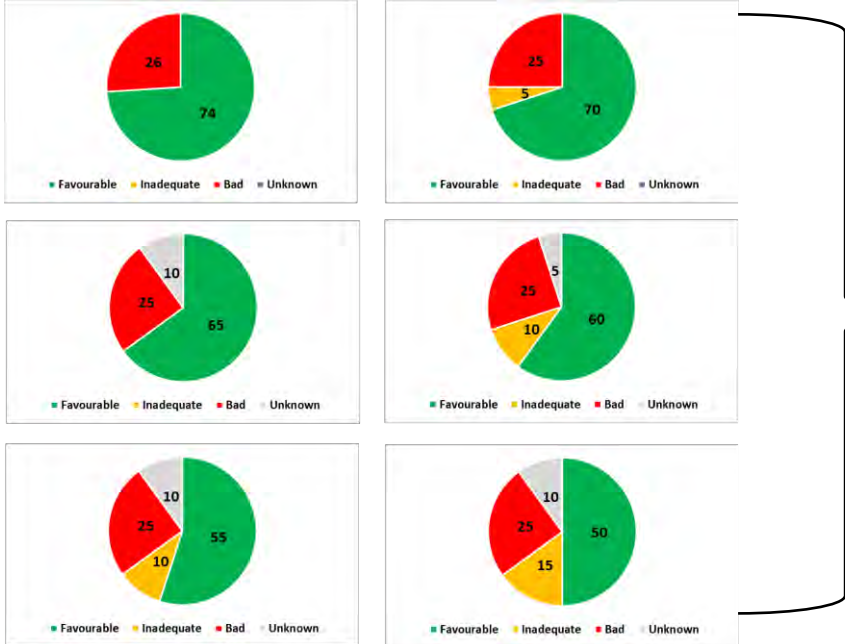
# Conservation Status Assessment at EU Regional Level

if habitat is in several MS with different evaluation – weighting of parameters and share of MS results according to the following rules:

**From Member State Reports to ....**

**..... Result at EU Biogeographical Level**

If ...	... the habitat is considered ...
the proportion of a habitat reported as ‘bad’ is greater than or equal to <b>25%</b>	Unfavourable-bad (Bad)
the proportion of a habitat reported as ‘good’ is greater than or equal to <b>75%</b>	Favourable (Good)
the proportion of a habitat reported as ‘unknown’ is greater than or equal to <b>25%</b>	Unknown
any other combination applies	Unfavourable-inadequate (Poor)



“Bad” conservation status at EU Regional Level even if the majority of Member State assessments is “Favourable”

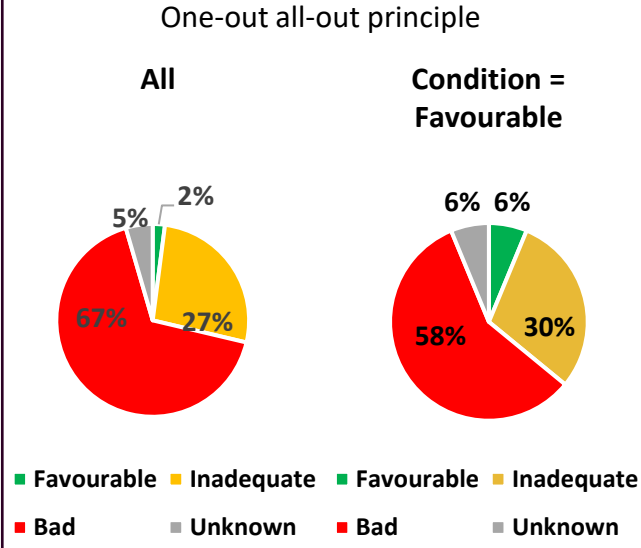


# Cascade of turning "Good" into "Bad"

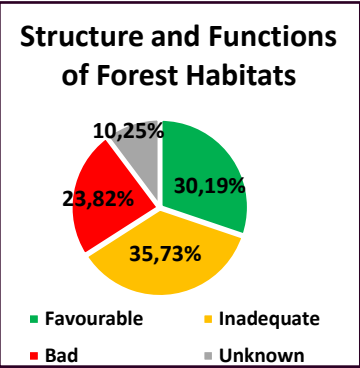
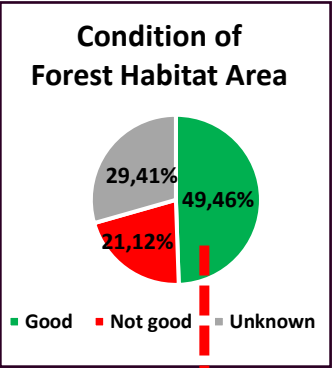
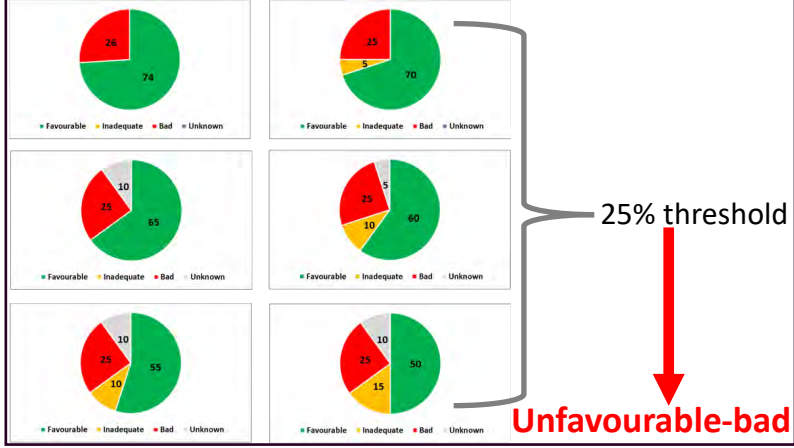
## Parameter "Structure and Functions" (Habitat Condition)



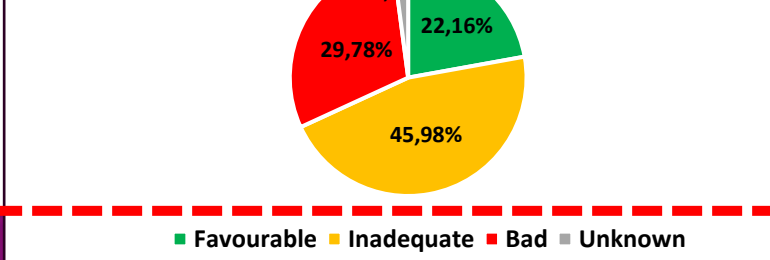
## Combining Parameters to Conservation Status



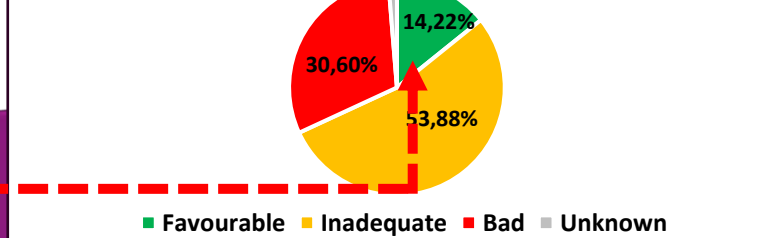
## Combining Member State Results to EU regional Results



## Conservation Status of Forest Habitats Member States

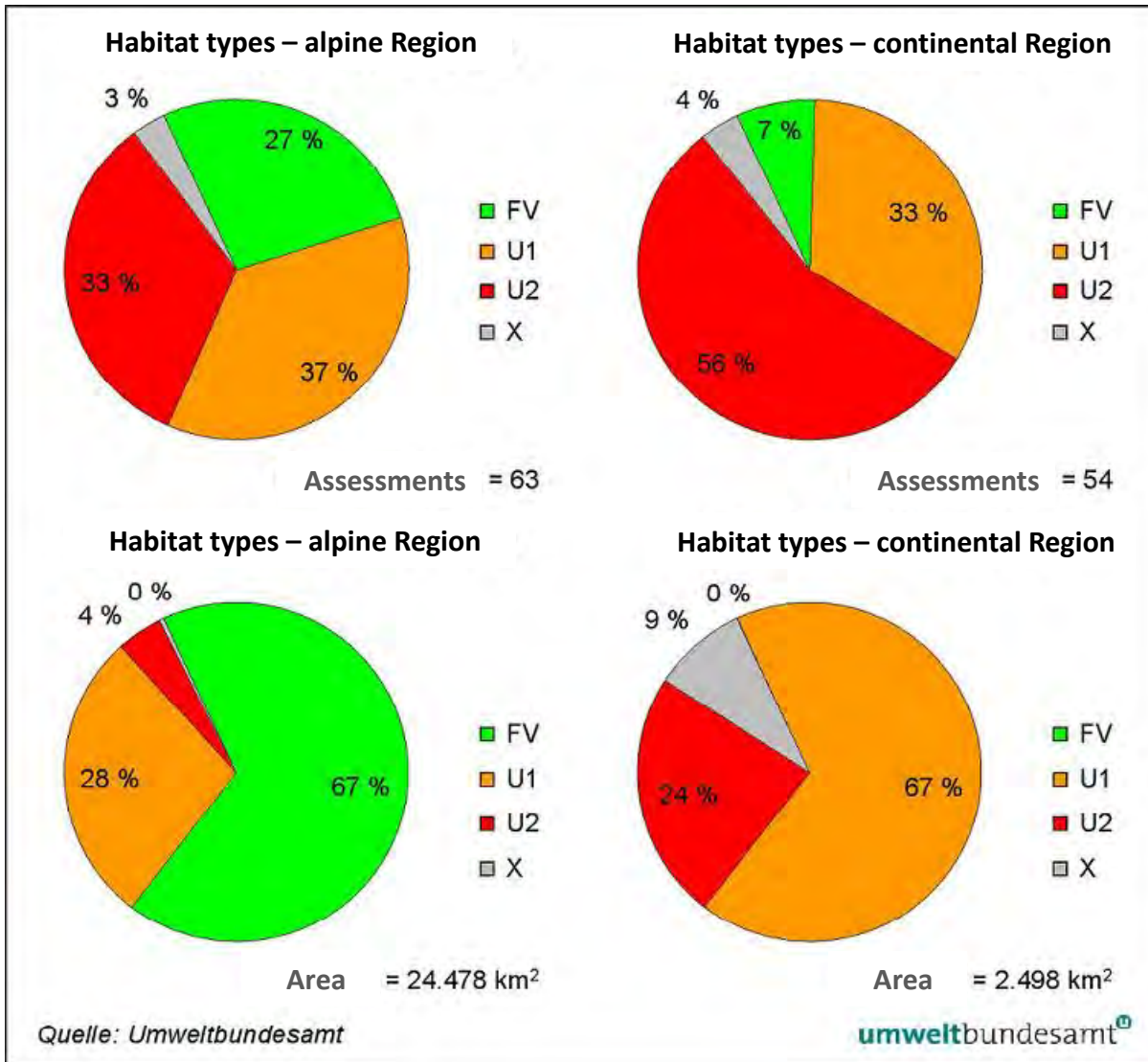


## Conservation Status of Forest Habitats EU Regional





# Differences between Area- and Case-based Results - Example Austria



Case-based

Area-based

## Austrian National Report 2020 according to Habitats Directive Article 17

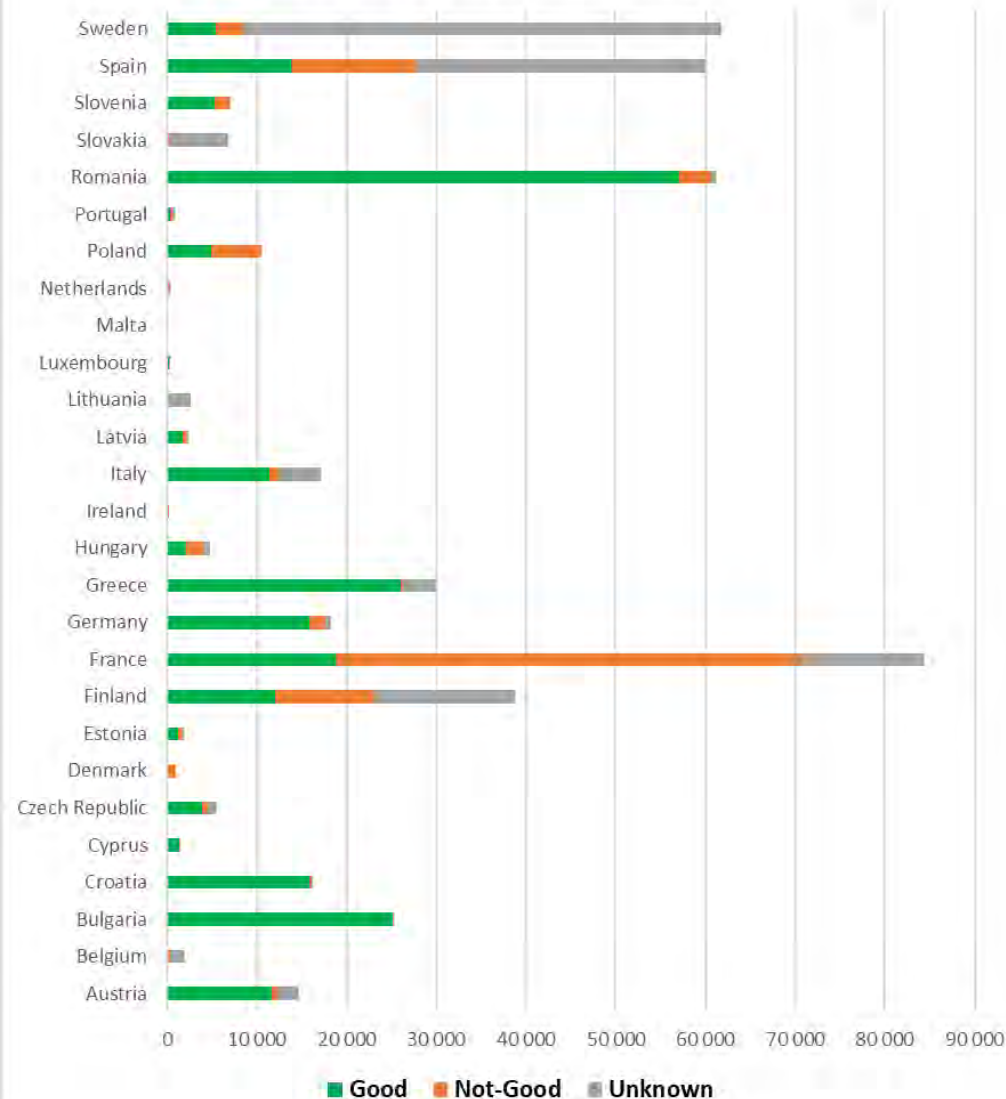
Umweltbundesamt (2020): Ellmayer, T.; Igel, V.; Kudrnovsky, H.; Moser, D. & Paternoster, D.: Monitoring von Lebensraumtypen und Arten von gemeinschaftlicher Bedeutung in Österreich 2016–2018 und Grundlagenerstellung für den Bericht gemäß Art.17 der FFH-Richtlinie im Jahr 2019: Teil 2: Artikel 17-Bericht. Im Auftrag der österreichischen Bundesländer. Umweltbundesamt, Reports Bd. REP-0734. Wien.

# Comparability between Member States

Forest Habitat Condition in % of Area assessed



Forest Habitat Condition in km<sup>2</sup> of Area assessed

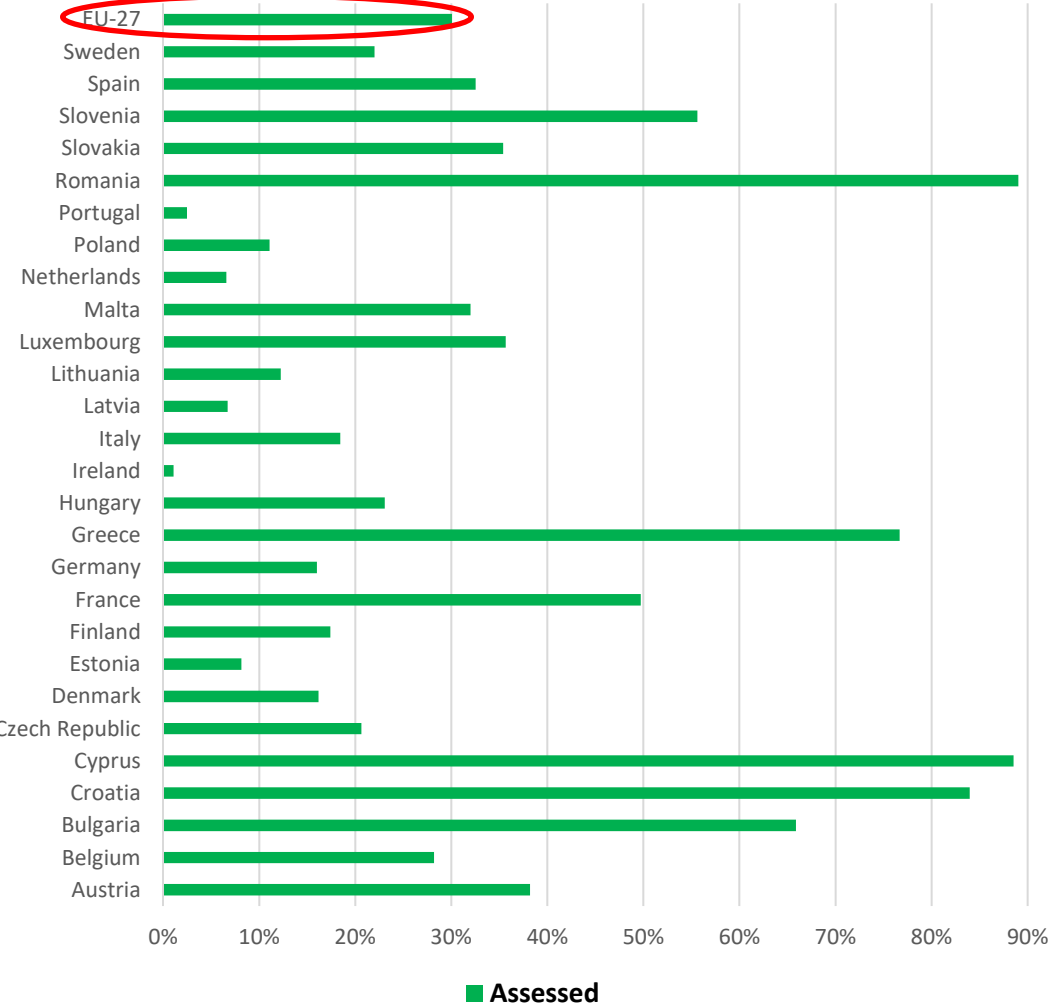


- **Good** condition dominating (>60% of area) in 15 MS
- **Not-good** condition predominantly in 5 MS (BE, DK, FR, NL, PL)

<https://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/biodiversity/state-of-nature-in-the-eu/article-17-national-summary-dashboards/condition-of-habitat>

# Limited Part of Forest Area covered by the Assessment

Forests assessed for Article 17 reporting as share of total forest area



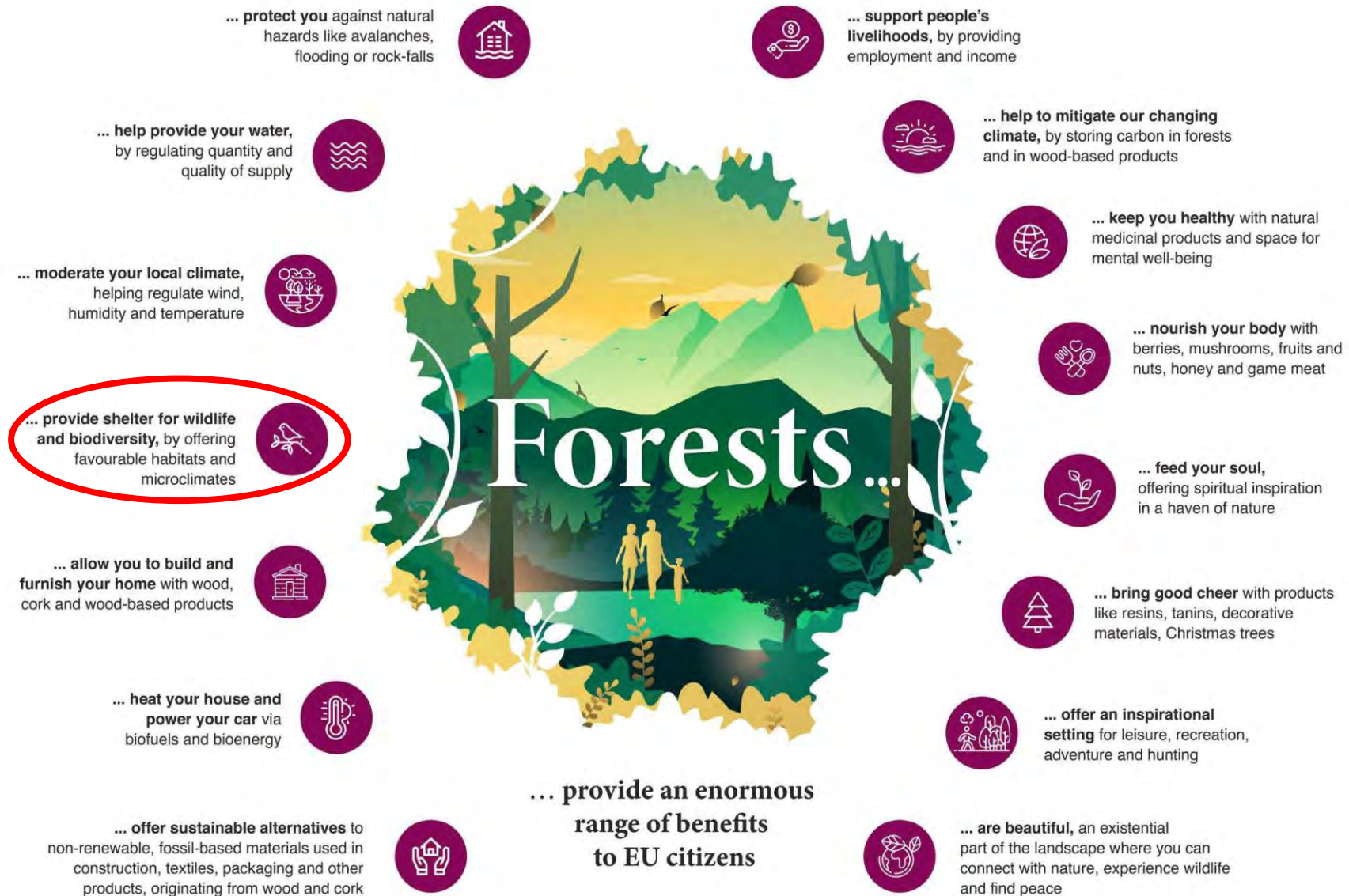
## Habitats Directive – ANNEX I

81 forest habitats

≈ 48% of all forest habitats in the EU (based on the classification of the European Nature Information System EUNIS)

≈ 31% of forest area in the EU (based on Forest Europe 2015 report)

# Multiple Roles Forests play for Society



# Assessment of the Health Status of EU Citizens

## 4 Parameters

Physical Condition  
Psychological Condition  
Social Health  
Future Prospects

## Parameter Status

**FV** Favourable/Good  
**U1** Unfavourable-inadequate  
**U2** Unfavourable-bad  
**X** Unknown

## Health Status is ...

**FV** Favourable/Good  
**U1** Unfavourable-inadequate  
**U2** Unfavourable-bad  
**X** Unknown

## if the 4 Parameters are .....

all **favourable** OR three **favourable** and one **unknown**  
one or more **inadequate** BUT no **bad**  
one or more **bad**  
two or more **unknown** combined with **favourable** OR all **unknown**



# Indicator for Physical Condition of male EU Citizens

Run 100 m in a time of ...

Usain Bolt, 2009: **10,64 seconds**  
9,58 seconds

**18 seconds**

90 years old man in 2007: 17:53 seconds  
German Sports Badge in Bronze: limit for  
35-39 years old men: 17,6 seconds

Health Status is ...

**FV Favourable**

**U1 Unfavourable-inadequate**

**U2 Unfavourable-bad**

**X Unknown**

if the 4 Parameters are .....

all **favourable** OR three **favourable** and one **unknown**

one or more **inadequate** BUT no **bad**

one or more **bad**

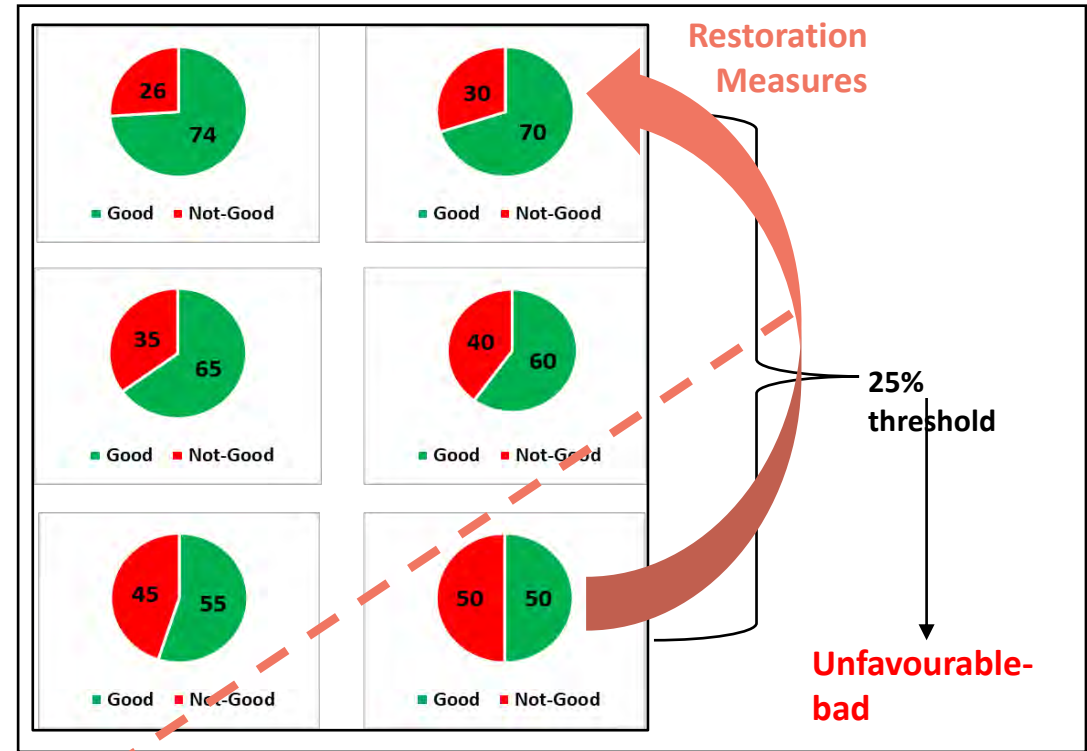
two or more **unknown** combined with **favourable** OR all **unknown**

# Some problematic Aspects

- 1) **Limited selection of habitats assessed** (only those listed in Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive)
- 2) **Feasibility** of indicators/benchmarks/thresholds in assessing the 4 parameters for a cultural landscape that has been managed for centuries to serve manifold human needs, and continues to do so
- 3) **One-out all-out principle** in combining the parameter statutes to assess the conservation status
- 4) **Thresholds** used for calculating EU regional results from Member State results
- 5) **Cascading effect or aspects 2-4**
- 6) **Limited and partly insufficient data availability and quality**
- 7) **Limited comparability** of Member State results
- 8) **Missing inclusion of habitat area** – big differences between area-based and case-based numbers
- 9) **Selective communication** on assessment results
- 10) **Confusion** of nature conservation status with general status of forests
- 11) **Potential confusion due to contradicting results** on improvement/deterioration of habitats compared to the upcoming methodology to assess the good condition of ecosystems to monitor the implementation of restoration measures



# Contradicting Results on Change of Habitat Condition?



Article 17 Reporting  
Structure and Functions **bad**  
Conservation Status **bad**

Nature Restoration Law Monitoring  
Improved condition

# Recommendations

- 1) Present, communicate and interpret assessment results **with caution**
- 2) Respect in the interpretation/communication on results the **logic of the assessment method**
- 3) Do **not transfer** the results to all forests in the EU
- 4) Present **case-based and area-based results** to allow in-depth analysis and better perception of the reality in nature
- 5) Review **the assessment method** regarding the ...
  - use of indicators/benchmarks/thresholds feasible for a **cultural landscape** that has been managed for centuries to serve manifold human needs, and continues to do so
  - thresholds to **upscale Member States results to EU regional results**
- 6) Improve **data quality and comparability** between Member State approaches/results

# Conclusions on Conservation Status Assessment

Results with **high share** of **inadequate** and **bad** conservation status are to a great extent an **artifact of the method** and provide a rather **distorted picture of the reality**

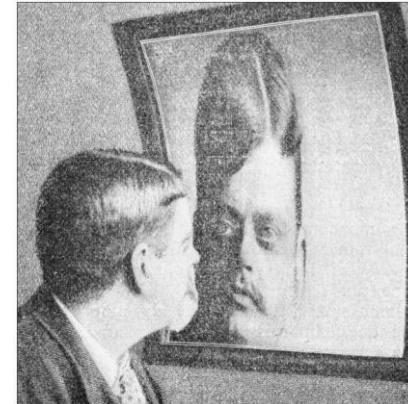
... in Reality



... in the Assessment



... in the Communication





*Photo: Sanit Fuangnakhon / Shutterstock*

**Thank you  
for your attention!**