

EUFORE Task 3.6.2 Workshop in connection to the 74th FTP Advisory Committee

“The Commitment and Role for Industry, Forest Owners and other Private Stakeholders in a Future Forest Partnership”

Date and place: The workshop will take place online under the umbrella of the 74th FTP Advisory Committee starting ca15h30-16h45, 18 May 2026

Workshop objectives:

- To inform about the latest developments in the Forests and Forestry for a Sustainable Future Partnership
- Assess the level of initial commitment among industry partners, forest owners and other private financing institutions to actively contribute to the implementation of the EUFORE SRIA.

Agenda

5’ - Introduction and objective of the mini-workshop – Johan Elvnert

20’ – The Forests and Forestry Partnership - Mika Kallio

Focus of presentation part 1:

- Short history of the efforts to initiate the Partnership
- Partnership Governance and Decision Structure
- Partnership Budget and annual Budget for R&I funding
- The Partnership SRIA explained

10’ - Q&A and Discussion (All)

15’ – Scope, eligibility and funding particularities of the partnership – Mika Kallio

Focus of presentation part 2:

- Eligibility rules for applications
- What kind of funding instruments will be used?
- The foreseen role of Large Enterprises, SMEs, forest owners and forest cooperatives
- How industry and forest owners can influence the call topics and the work programmes

20’ - Q&A and Discussion (All)

5’ - Rounding up and conclusions – Vanessa Bano

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Philip **André Reme**, Chair NSG Norway, RISE-PFI

Claudia **Antoniotti**, NSG France, Xylofuture

Leo **Arpa**, co-Chair NSG Austria, Mondi Group

Vanesa **Bano**, InnovaWood

Pau **Brunet Navarro**, NSG Spain, CTFC

Stefano **Bruzzese**, EUFORE, Italian Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry

Johan **Elnert**, FTP secretariat

Dalila **Frasson**, EUFORE, Italian Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry

Alex **Giurca**, EUFORE, EFI

Sophie **Hugon**, FTP secretariat

Mika **Kallio**, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Finland

Anni-**Karpinen Lund**, NSG Finland, Stora Enso

Laura **Liepina**, EC DG AGRI

Lise **Malassenet**, NSG France, CTP, Centre Technique

Inazio **Martinez de Arano**, EFI

Peter **Mayer**, co-Chair NSG Austria, BFW Austrian Research Centre for Forests

Jenny **Muller-Wahlman**, Chair NSG Finland, StoraEnso

Gintautas **Nedzveckas**, NSG Lithuania, FOAL forest and Landowners Association Lithuania

Torgny **Persson**, Chair NSG Sweden, Swedish Forest Industries Association

Ratislav **Rasi**, NSG Slovakia, BioEast, National Forest Centre Slovakia

Amparo **Roca de Togores Lopes**, NSG Spain, AIDIMME

Vicente **Sales Vivó**, Chair NSG Spain, AIDIMME

Jan **Schmidt**, EUFORE, FNR

Alois **Schuschnigg**, NSG Austria, BFW Austrian Research Centre for Forests

Robert **Stelstra**, EUSTAFOR, European State Forest Association

Marek **Veselsky**, EC, DG RTD

Igor **Viszlai**, Chair NSG Slovakia, LignoSilva Project, National Forest Centre Slovakia

Jeremy **Wall**, EC emeritus

Gerhard **Weiss**, EUFORE, BOKU University

Workshop Minutes

ELVNERT welcomed the participants and outlined the state-of-play and purpose of the workshop. To reach the objective of reaching Europe's SMEs, Industry and forest owners and managers, the best outreach was accomplished through the FTP National Support Groups (NSGs) and the Industry Confederations and Forester Associations participating in the FTP Advisory Committee (AC). The Workshop had therefore been organised back-to-back with a FTP AC meeting.

The primary objective would be to open a dialogue on the perspective of the private stakeholders and to give them pertinent information about how the FOREST Partnership would be set up, governed, its funding rules and how it intends to encourage the efforts of private actors.

ELVNERT welcomed Mika Kallio, who would present the Partnership under preparation.

KALLIO announced the full title of the Partnership being: "Forests, forestry and the forest-based sector: REsearch and innovation for a Sustainable Transition" (FOREST)

He continued by outlining the efforts and process to establish the FOREST Partnership. The main initiative to the partnership and the coordination of the process came from the Forestry Working Group of the Standing Committee on Agriculture Research (SCAR Forestry) which made a first proposal to the European Commission in 2019 with a SIRA based on the FTP SIRA. This proposal had been rejected by the EC.

In 2021, DG AGRI came back to SCAR Forestry asking for a first draft of a Forestry Partnership, which was submitted by SCAR and reviewed in an internal consultation by DG AGRI as lead DG and DGs RTD, GROW, CLIMA, JRC, and ENVI as associated DGs.

In 2022, an updated draft of the Partnership draft was submitted and a Horizon Europe call was launched for a Coordination and Support Action project to support SCAR Forest's work towards a Forest Partnership. The proposal receiving the EU Grant became the EUFORE project.

The Forest Partnership was on the list of potential new partnerships that the EC published in 2024 and soon thereafter, in June 2024, the first commitment request was sent from the EC to national ministries. It then took until 2025 until Horizon Europe Cluster 6 opened a Call for partnership submissions, and in late 2025, a project application was submitted for a Forest Partnership with 100 beneficiaries. At the same time, the EUFORE project finalised the EUFORE SIRA.

KALLIO explained the proposed Partnership governance:

A **General Assembly** will consist of all Partnership project beneficiaries (mainly the National Funding Agencies) and the European Commission. It would be the decision-making body.

The **Steering Committee** – will provide high-level strategic guidance to ensure alignment between policy objectives and research priorities. The plan is that it should be composed of up to two representatives of each participating country

The **Scientific and Stakeholder Advisory Board**: Is planned to consist of high-level scientists and other key stakeholders to provide feedback and suggestions on the relevance and societal impact of the main activities of the partnership.

National Mirror Groups will not be mandatory, but in some countries increase contact with stakeholders

An **Executive Committee** appointed by the General Assembly will stand for the Operational Management

A **Coordination Unit** with Coordinator plus 4 full-time administrators will support the Executive Committee in coordinating the work of the partnership.

A **Call Steering Committee** will prepare the Calls and the Call texts. Here **KALLIO** emphasised that the Call Steering Committee would be “isolated” to avoid conflicts of interest.

PERSSON raised a question about the **National Mirror Groups** and if they would consist of the existing FTP National Support Groups or if a new system would be established. This, **PERSSON** emphasised would lead to duplication of efforts and general confusion.

KALLIO explained that this was up to the participating countries but in most countries, he assumed that the FTP NSGs would be the National Mirror Groups.

KALLIO continued to outline the partnership budget commitments. The duration of the Partnership would be 10 years and the EC had committed 70M Euro and the National Funding Agencies had committed 241M Euro for this period bringing the total Partnership costs to ca 311M Euro. The estimated funding made available for applicants was estimated to 235M Euro. Planned was 7 Calls funding some 200-250 projects with approximately 400 beneficiaries in total. In addition, practical collaboration formats

was proposed such as living lab pilots, joint monitoring projects, sharing research and technology infrastructure, interaction forums and opportunities for training and international networking for young researchers.

KALLIO continued by explaining the Partnership SRIA, which is/will be based on but separate from the EUFORE SRIA: It would serve as a strategic compass for the Partnership and defines key R&I areas and help integrate science-policy-practice interface through stakeholder engagement. The Partnership SRIA will be regularly updated.

KARPINEN-LUND asked if the grant funding would be paid out from the European Commission or from the National Funding Agencies

KALLIO clarified that the funding to applicants would be paid out by the National Funding Agencies.

PERSSON asked which countries that was included in the Partnership.

KALLIO explained that at the moment 28 countries so more or less all EU countries were represented in the Partnership and that some countries were predicted to join at a later stage.

ROCA DE TOGORES LOPES commented that it already existed a European SIRA for the forest-based sector, the FTP SIRA and in her opinion, it was inefficient to develop a new SRIA and asked who and how many people that had been giving input to the EUFORE SRIA.

She also remarked that being a co-funded Partnership, the FOREST Partnership was not going to provide the same funding for all the countries involved, and it was not going to be the same funding even for different stakeholders within the same country. For example, in Spain, the funding for a SMEs or a company came from one funding agency and the funding for universities and public organisations came from another funding agency and, for private research institutions, funding was only available via subcontracting.

SCHMIDT answered that roundabout 150 and 200 stakeholders had been involved in a lengthy process. And the stakeholders came from the quadruple helix: academia, public policymakers, civil society and the private sector. The development of a new SRIA had been requirement by the EC.

KALLIO agreed that it is going to be a complex environment where the national funding agencies strategies and priorities were also influencing the implementation. Not only the SRIA.

ELVNERT intervened regarding the duplication of SIRAs and suggested that one of the causes of confusion launching the EUFORE SRIA was due to the branding of the EUFORE SRIA as a “SRIA for the forest-based sector”, which already exists. It should perhaps have been more correctly branded as the SRIA for the FOREST Partnership. Since the EU funding to the forest-based sector from Horizon Europe and several existing European Partnerships, such as the CBE JU, was 680 million Euro in 2024, the Partnership would be one new and important piece of the funding landscape, but the FTP SRIA was trying to cover all subjects for the forest-based value-chain. It would have been easier for stakeholders to understand the roles of the two different SIRAs, if this was clearer specified for the future.

KALLIO thanked for the input and continued to inform about the timeline for the coming calls. The first Partnership Call would open in September. The evaluation would be a two-stage process to reduce the burden for the applicants, and the evaluation would be centralised to ensure fairness and scientific excellence. A minimum criterion for the proposals would be to have representation from at least three countries.

ELVNERT asked if applications should be sent to the EU Funding and Tenders Portal or to the National Funding Agencies.

KALLIO explained that the pre-proposal applications will be sent to a central partnership system. Each beneficiary would have to specify also which national funding agency they would ask funding from. Then if the application was selected the beneficiaries would have their grant agreements with their national funding agencies and sign the grant agreement with their national funding agency.

KARPINEN-LUND asked how it would work for a multi-national organisation, such as Stora Enso. Could each business unit only apply in one country even if the business unit covered several countries?

KALLIO confirmed that this would be the case.

KARPINEN-LUND reflected that this added complication since for instance Stora Enso’s research centres were located in two different countries.

ROCA DE TOGORES LOPES intervened that in her experience, a proposal selected by the Partnership would still have to be re-evaluated on the national level if it was going to be granted national funding.

KALLIO said that he was certain this would not be the case.

ELVNERT asked if SMEs and companies would be eligible for funding.

KALLIO explained that it would depend on the rules of each national funding agency and this would be defined in the “National Annex” to the Partnership Agreement.

WALL asked what would be the legal status of the Partnership?

KALLIO: Clarified that the partnership was not a legal entity but would be a European Project. So, as an EU project it would act according to the Grant Agreement and involve the beneficiaries and EU rules specified therein.

MARTINEZ DE ARANO: asked how the existence of the Partnership would influence the presence of forest-related topics in Horizon Europe. Would the EU funding to the Partnership mean that less funding was available in Horizon Europe?

KALLIO replied that this was difficult to answer.

RASI: asked if special consideration or specific support would be given to widening countries?

BANO asked how the Partnership would decide on which call topics to prioritise, since the scope was broad.

KALLIO explained that there was in the Partnership Agreement a dedicated work package on open consultations. In the open consultations, stakeholders would be asked about their priorities in the coming years. Then the National Funding Agencies would discuss the consultation results and the national priorities to then decide what calls that would be launched for the coming period.

ELVNERT asked what would be eligible as costs in the projects. Would it be the same eligible costs as EU projects?

KALLIO replied that the eligible costs would also be based on the costs eligible on the national level and the rules for each of the funding agencies.

VISZLAI asked if there was agreed on the project budgets minimum and maximum.

KALLIO No, but it would be up again to the national funding agencies.

As there were no more questions, **ELVNERT** thanked **KALLIO** and the participants for the good discussions and concluded that the ambition for the workshop was to reach the private stakeholders and therefore urged the NSG representatives to convey the impressions and information from the workshop to their national stakeholders. He continued by conveying that the private stakeholders would wish out of the Partnership a strong focus on the projects resulting in practically applicable results and that private stakeholders would like to be directly involved in the projects and not only in different advisory groups. The private actors had problems needing concrete solutions. **ELVNERT**

confessed that many private stakeholders experienced a degree of fatigue and language barrier with the research/public funding community. Language such as “lighthouse projects” or “living labs” did not explain anything to forest owners and business representatives.

BANO thanked **KALLIO** and the participants for the excellent and continued to summarise some key points and reflexions from the day.

She reminded the participants of all the efforts that lead to the establishment of the Partnership and found the explanations about the Partnership governance and decision-making structure very helpful. The clarifications on the Partnership SRIA in relation to the FTP SIRA was also very useful. She reflected that many questions had been asked and that they had been answered to the degree possible at this stage of the process. The evaluation procedure with a joint application at the European level while the individual beneficiary receiving funding from the National Funding Agencies was complicated and questions had been raised, but would hopefully work efficiently once the Partnership was up and running. She also hoped that the prioritisation of call topics would become clearer as the process continued. It was good to know that SMEs and industry could be funded depending on the National Funding Agencies rules and that these would be specified in the National Annex.

BANO concluded the Workshop by thanking the speakers and participants for the engagement and interesting discussions and for their participation for the day.

- Closing of the Workshop -