

Monitoring framework for resilient European forests

2023/0413(COD) - 22/11/2023 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to set up an EU forest monitoring framework for the collection of forest data.

PROPOSED ACT: Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: EU forests and other wooded land are increasingly stressed by climate change and unsustainable direct or indirect human use and activity, and related land use changes. Hazards like wildfires, pest outbreaks, droughts, and heatwaves, often reinforcing each other, are likely to lead to more frequent and intense catastrophic events, often beyond national borders. These pressures undermine forest resilience and pose a threat to the capacity of forests to fulfil their various environmental, social and economic functions. Some hazards, for example wildfires, also pose a direct threat to human health and safety.

Current monitoring tools are not fully fit for purpose. Services such as the Copernicus-driven European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS) and the Forest High Resolution Layer of the Copernicus Land Monitoring Service have brought about some degree of standardised remote sensing-based monitoring and data in the EU.

Overall, information about the status of forests in the EU, their ecological, social and economic value, the pressures they face and ecosystem services they provide, is fragmented and patchy, largely heterogeneous and inconsistent, with data gaps and overlaps, and data is provided with significant delay and often only on a voluntary basis. Although there are existing reporting processes, the EU lacks a common system for the consistent collection and sharing of accurate and comparable forest data.

CONTENT: the Commission proposes this draft Regulation which aims to put in place a **comprehensive, high-quality monitoring system** that ensures **standardised or harmonised data** and covers all forests and other wooded land. It will build on existing data sets, good practices of Member States and the technological advancement of remote sensing as well the EU capacity to provide these services.

Specifically, the forest monitoring initiative will create:

A forest monitoring framework which includes rules to:

- ensure timeliness, accuracy, consistency, transparency, comparability and completeness of forest data within the Union and their public accessibility;
- support the voluntary development of integrated long-term plans at the level of the Member States through an evidence-based, inclusive, cross-sectoral and adaptive approach;
- set up a strengthened governance between the Commission and the Member States.

A forest monitoring system

The Commission will set up, in cooperation with the Member States, and operate a forest monitoring system comprising the following elements:

- a **geographically explicit identification system** for the **mapping and localisation** of forest units;
- a **forest data collection framework** combining: (i) standardised data, for which the Commission will take the lead role and provide a cost-effective service primarily from Earth observation (Copernicus); (ii) harmonised data, largely from National Forest Inventories, that is comparable across Europe;
- a **forest data sharing framework**. The forest monitoring system will consist of electronic databases and geographic information systems and will enable the exchange and integration of forest data with other electronic databases and geographic information systems.

The monitoring system will ensure the regular and systematic collection of:

- forest data on the basis of aerial or space-borne ortho-imagery, by Copernicus Sentinel satellites or other equivalent systems;
- *in situ* data through a network of monitoring sites.