

Forests: protection and monitoring of atmospheric pollution and fires, action 2003-2008

Forest Focus

2002/0164(COD) - 15/07/2002 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to present a draft European Parliament and Council Regulation concerning monitoring of forests and environmental interactions in the Community (Forest Focus). **CONTENT** : the purpose of the present proposal for a European Parliament and Council regulation is the establishment of a new Community scheme on monitoring of forests and environmental interactions to protect the Community's forests. The scheme will be built on the achievements of two Council regulations for monitoring the impacts of atmospheric pollution and of fires on forest ecosystems. The present proposal provides a multi-annual framework covering initially a 6 year period from 2003 to 2008. Co-financing of National Forest Monitoring Programmes in the Member States of up to 50% of the eligible costs is envisaged. Provision has been made to finance the studies and pilot projects required to develop the monitoring of forest biodiversity, carbon sequestration and soil properties and to enhance existing monitoring activities by giving them an EU-wide scope. EUR 52 million has been proposed for the period 2003-2006, with an annual allocation of EUR 13 million. Forest Focus would be open to the candidate countries. It aims at adapting the scope of the above mentioned regulations to provide a flexible monitoring scheme to assess forest ecosystem conditions in a broader context. It also simplifies existing activities by regrouping elements of both regulations under a single framework regulation covering the protection and monitoring of forests. This new scheme will provide data and information to allow a risk assessment on forest ecosystem condition. Single factors, but in particular the combination of different stress factors can severely damage or destroy forest ecosystems. Information on the trends in forest condition that can be available at an early stage can help to develop appropriate measures to improve forest conditions or to eliminate the stress factors causing damages. Departing from the basic objective indicated above, a set of objectives corresponding to the particular monitoring exercises can be defined. These are as follows: - To provide information on the spatial and temporal variation in forest ecosystem condition, in relation to anthropogenic as well as natural stress factors, for the different eco-regions of the European Union. - To provide information on forest fires and causes of forest fires in the Union and develop models for forest fire prediction and prevention based on the condition of the forest ecosystem. - To provide quality information that provides a sound basis for political decisions on abating factors affecting the forest ecosystem condition and to devise methods of maintaining and restoring damaged forest ecosystems. - To fulfil obligations that already have been taken up by the Union (e.g. Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, Convention on Biodiversity), to support pan-European and international discussions (e.g. Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests) and to respond to requirements that will evolve in the future (EU Soil Strategy, Clean air for Europe - CAFE, etc).