# Forest policy: implementation of the European Union's forestry strategy

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TheEuropean Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Heinz **KINDERMANN** (PES, DE) in response to the Commission paper on the implementation of the EU forestry strategy.

**Fundamental aspects:**Parliament supported the Commission's proposal to draw up an 'EU Action Plan for Sustainable Forest Management', which should operate for a five-year period. In view of the many effects of the Community's sectoral policies on forests and in view of the Lisbon and Göteborg Strategies, the Commission and Council should have an objective report drawn up to examine the scope for creating a separate legal basis for forests in the EC Treaty or in a future draft Constitution. The subsidiarity principle must be taken into account to a special degree in all legal acts affecting forests, as long as the EU lacks a separate legal basis for forests.

Parliament proposed 11 strategy elements:

**- Active participation in international processes relevant to forestry:** Parliament welcomed the fact that, thanks to a dynamic dialogue within the framework of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE), the Member States and the Commission had arrived at a common vision of sustainable forest management. Parliament felt that a legally binding instrument is the best means of ensuring sustainable forest management in its environmental and social dimensions.

**- Implementation of national forestry programmes in order to comply with international commitments:** the Commission and the Member States should apply the approach developed at the MCPFE as a uniform instrument for national forestry programmes and adopt assessment criteria in order to facilitate an evaluation of the attainment of objectives.

**- Improving coordination, communication and cooperation in all fields of policy of relevance to forestry:** Parliament proposedthat, in addition to the existing horizontal integration of the Commission departments responsible for forestry issues, consideration should be given to vertical integration over all levels of work of Commission departments, with a basis in the Secretariat. It also felt that remit of the Standing Forestry Committee should be extended by giving it a practical dimension.

**- Promoting sustainable forest management as part of policy on conserving and developing rural areas:** Effective monitoring systems should be established for forestry measures to be implemented by Member States with co-financing from the EU pursuant to Council Regulation 1257/1999/EC. The Commission and the Member States must take increased account of the objectives of the EU forestry strategy and the EU action plan for sustainable forest management when drawing up their corresponding rural development programmes.

**- Protecting Europe's forests:** the EU action plan for sustainable forest management must contain effective measures to avert dangers and cope with serious disasters (fires, storms, insect infestations and drought). It must pay more attention to protecting the soil, water and air and also biodiversity and typical forest landscapes. Parliament also stressed the importance of reafforestation as a vital instrument in combating desertification and maintaining biodiversity, and reducing the risk of fire.

**- Protecting tropical forests:** Parliament supported the current FLEGT initiatives to combat illegal logging and enforce international agreements.

**- Mitigating climate change and contributing to sustainable energy supplies:** it was vital that the importance of forests and forestry products in mitigating climate change should be recognised and that the EU should promote research, activities to promote the image of wood and exchanges of information in this field. Biomass, particularly from wood, should be fully included in political measures to develop renewable energy sources (cooling, heating and power (CHP), biofuels). Member States were asked to assess the possibilities of tax concessions for wood-based heating.

**- Promoting competitiveness, employment and income in the forest-based sector:** Parliament welcomed the fact that incentives to encourage voluntary mergers between smaller forestry businesses had been provided at national and Community level. The Commission should draw up the necessary studies on the fiscal measures which may be taken by the individual Member States with a view to applying positive differentiation with regard to taxation for producers who have fewer negative impacts on the environment. The implementation of measures aimed at the prevention of fires and desertification, afforestation with native species, the promotion of biodiversity, the sustainable management of natural forests and the fostering of environmental benefits such as protection for water systems and the combating of erosion represent positive externalities which such producers provide to society and for which they should be duly compensated.

**- Promoting forest-related research and development:** there were calls for an increase in promotion of forest-related research and development work and more recognition of the multifunctional role played by forests, particularly with regard to the sustainable development of biodiversity, by including key forestry research projects in the 7th Framework Programme.

**- Promoting sustainable forest management by means of training and further training programmes:** the support of forest owners in terms of education, capacity building, information activity and advisory services would be a prerequisite for the sustainable use of forests in the context of rural development.

**- Promoting sustainable forest management by means of information and communication strategies: Parliament w**elcomed the efforts of European forestry undertakings to give consumers assurances concerning sustainable forest management which takes account of the multifunctional role of forests, notablyby means of certified wood products. The FSC and PEFC certification systems were equally suitable for this purpose.