Basic information

2010/2106(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Commission Green Paper "On forest protection and information in the EU: preparing forests for climate change" **Subject** 3.10.11 Forestry policy 3.70.03 Climate policy, climate change, ozone layer	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	ARSENIS Kriton (S&D)	30/09/2010

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
ITRE Industry, Research and Energy	EK Lena (ALDE)	15/06/2010
REGI Regional Development	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
AGRI Agriculture and Rural Development (Associated committee)	NICULESCU Rareș-Lucian (PPE)	28/06/2010

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Environment	POTOČNIK Janez

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
01/03/2010	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2010)0066	Summary
08/07/2010	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
08/07/2010	Referral to associated committees announced in Parliament		
16/03/2011	Vote in committee		Summary
01/04/2011	Committee report tabled for plenary	A7-0113/2011	

09/05/2011	Debate in Parliament		
11/05/2011	Decision by Parliament	T7-0226/2011	Summary
11/05/2011	Results of vote in Parliament		
11/05/2011	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2010/2106(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 165
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	ENVI/7/02554

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee opinion	ITRE	PE445.989	12/11/2010	
Committee opinion	AGRI	PE450.698	08/12/2010	
Committee draft report		PE454.734	20/12/2010	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE458.605	15/02/2011	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE458.622	15/02/2011	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE458.623	15/02/2011	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A7-0113/2011	01/04/2011	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T7-0226/2011	11/05/2011	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2010)0066	01/03/2010	Summary

National parliaments

Document type	Parliament /Chamber	Reference	Date	Summary
Contribution	CZ_SENATE	COM(2010)0066	24/09/2010	

Contribution	DK_PARLIAMENT	COM(2010)0066	06/10/2010	
Contribution	SE_PARLIAMENT	COM(2010)0066	13/10/2010	
Contribution	PT_PARLIAMENT	COM(2010)0066	22/11/2010	

Commission Green Paper "On forest protection and information in the EU: preparing forests for climate change"

2010/2106(INI) - 01/03/2010 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE : Green Paper on options for a European Union (EU) approach to forest protection and information.

CONTENT : many forests throughout Europe will increasingly be challenged by climate change. Preparing to meet these challenges now is the best way to ensure that forests can continue to deliver all their functions. The purpose of this Green Paper is to launch the debate on options for a EU approach to forest protection and information in the framework of the EU Forest Action Plan, as announced by the Commission in the White Paper " Adapting to Climate Change: towards a European Framework for action". Climate change has had and will have an impact, inter alia, on forests. As these impacts will have socio-economic and environmental consequences, it is opportune to prepare now so that EU forests can continue to perform all their functions under changing climatic conditions.

The Green Paper notes that forests serve multiple and inter-related social, economic and environmental functions. They provide jobs, income and raw materials for industry and for renewable energy. They protect soil, human settlements and infrastructure, regulate freshwater supplies and conserve biodiversity. In climate terms, forests act as 'sinks' that absorb carbon dioxide when they are growing but they are sources of CO_2 when they are cut, burned or damaged by storms and pests. Forests also regulate local and regional weather.

Forests and other wooded areas cover some 176 million hectares of the EU or more than 42% of the EU's land area. EU forests have continuously expanded for over 60 years and today account for 5% of the world's forest area. Most EU forests have grown in terms of their wood volume and carbon stock, thus removing more CO_2 from the atmosphere. Globally, however, the loss of forests - mostly in developing countries - and other land use changes are now responsible for about 12-15% of global CO_2 emissions.

The average temperature in Europe has risen by almost 1°C during the past century and the most optimistic projection sees an increase of 2°C by 2100. This rapid rate of man-made climate change is overwhelming the natural ability of ecosystems to adapt. It will alter the suitability of whole regions for certain forest types, forcing a shift in the natural distribution of tree species and leading to changes in the growth of existing forest stands. Extreme events such as storms, forest fires, droughts and heat waves are expected to become much more common and/or severe, thus adding to pressure on forests.

Competence for forest policy lies primarily with the Member States. The role of the EU is limited and designed principally to add value to national forest policies and programmes by:

- monitoring and possibly reporting on the state of EU forests;
- anticipating global trends and drawing MS' attention to emerging challenges and,
- proposing and possibly coordinating or supporting options for early action at EU scale.

The debate launched by the Green Paper should therefore focus on how climate change modifies the terms of forest management and protection in Europe and how EU policy should evolve to enhance its contribution to Member States' forest-related initiatives. What challenges do we face, how can the EU help address them, what are our additional information needs? This Green Paper:

- identifies briefly the general situation and global relevance of forests;
- describes the characteristics of EU forests and their functions;
- identifies the main challenges faced by EU forests in a changing climate and how they could compromise forest functions;
- presents an overview of the tools available to ensure forest protection, and of the existing forest information systems that could be used to address the challenges and monitor environmental impacts and effects of actions.

In addition, it raises a series of questions relevant to developing options for future forest protection and information in the EU under a changing climate. The responses from EU institutions, Member States, EU citizens and other interested stakeholders will inform and guide Commission considerations regarding any additional action at EU level to better prepare EU forests for climate change, and enhance the fulfilment of their functions. It may also provide input for discussions concerning the possible update of the EU Forest Strategy on climate related aspects.

The Commission will publish stakeholders' contributions on Internet and will provide its own feedback of the main outcomes of the consultation.

The results of the public consultation will help shape the further work of the Commission regarding the contribution the EU can make to forest protection under a changing climate, including the information required to achieve this. Member States and stakeholders are requested to submit their replies to the Green Paper by 31 July 2010 at the latest.

Commission Green Paper "On forest protection and information in the EU: preparing forests for climate change"

2010/2106(INI) - 11/05/2011 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the Commission Green Paper on forest protection and information in the EU: preparing forests for climate change.

Whilst it welcomes the Commission Green Paper, it considers that the **EU strategy on forests should be strengthened** with a view to improving sustainable management and conservation. It stresses that the above-mentioned EU Forestry Strategy and Forest Action Plan should be updated to **include the climate-change dimension** and wider forest protection issues.

The Commission and the Member States are called upon to intensify efforts to achieve the environment and quality-of-life goals of the FAP, the implementation of which is currently lagging behind.

Sustainable management: Members consider that sustainable forest management (SFM) is essential to the continuing ability of EU forests to carry out economic, ecological and social functions. They call on the Commission and Member States to demonstrate their **support for the Forest Europe process by making SFM implementation mandatory within the EU**. Members advocate full implementation of active SFM in the context of long-term national forest programmes (NFPs) incorporating national and regional priorities, measurable targets and evaluation criteria and taking account of the increased threats to forests from climate change.

The Commission is called upon tomake proposals to complement the Timber Regulation (EU) 995/2010 to ensure that all timber or timber products placed on the European market are sourced from sustainably managed forests.

Research on forests: Members state that **financial resources** for research into the impact of climate change on forests need to be **increased**. Member States are called upon to: (i) set up joint long-term research programmes to improve understanding of impacts and vulnerability and to support adaptation measures in the forest sector; (ii) drive forward research into climate change and its consequences for forests; (iii) foster broader awareness of the diverse significance of forests and the importance of managing them sustainably; (iv) encourage the exchange of knowledge and experience.

CAP Pillar 2: the resolution points out that discussions on the future of the CAP after 2013 should take account of the fact that forests provide essential environmental functions and contribute to achievement of the social and economic objectives of rural development and national economies. Members call therefore on Member States and regions to cooperate fully with forest authorities and the wider public in the preparation of rural development programmes to ensure consistency between EU policies, taking into account that forestry may, in some cases, be an independent sector of the rural economy.

Parliament maintains that rural producers, producer groups and public bodies should be made eligible for forestry measures in the second pillar of the CAP. It considers that the EU should continue to provide **aid for forestation** under the national rural development programmes, while making sure that these initiatives do not interfere with the market and that forestation measures rely on local, pest-resistant and fire-resistant material and contribute to biodiversity conservation.

The resolution calls for the development of a standard for good forestry practices to be used as a baseline for support under all forest measures.

Civil protection and fire prevention: Members consider that forest fire prevention through landscape planning and connectivity, infrastructure and training should be firmly anchored in the EU's forest protection, adaptation and civil protection policies.

The resolution draws attention to the urgent need to implement the recommendations on the prevention of natural or human-made disasters which was recently adopted by the Parliament, especially those concerning support for afforestation/reafforestation schemes giving preference to local species and mixed forests, in the interests of biodiversity and improved resistance to fires, storms and diseases.

Emissions reporting and accounting: Parliament expresses its commitment to meeting the EU 2020 renewable energy target and the 2 degree Celsius climate-change target. It is concerned however that the short time-frames used in the current greenhouse gas (GHG) calculation methodology, and the resulting carbon neutrality assumption for woody biomass, could hinder their achievement. It calls on the Commission to consult the IPCC and establish a new GHG calculation methodology, controlling for longer time horizons and for biomass emissions from land use, land use change and forest management assessing carbon flow on a national level, and integrating the different phases in forestry (planting, thinning and harvesting).

Members also state that the current 'biofuel' criteria developed by the Commission are not suitable in the case of biomass and call for the development of **new legally binding sustainability criteria for biomass promoted for the use of energy.**

General proposals: Members call on the Commission to proceed with the drafting of a White Paper on Forest Protection in the EU, taking into account the results of the public consultation on the Green Paper, the widely perceived need to be prepared for climate change. The resolution considers that the White Paper, in addition to confirming the contribution of forests to the economy through wood and non-wood forest products and services, should focus on maintaining and increasing European forests, as they help European societies to mitigate climate change and adapt to its effects.

Members consider that a **higher level of protection** must be ensured for high-quality habitats and protective forests with functions in countering flooding, landslides, fires, desertification, loss of biodiversity and extreme weather catastrophes. They consider adequate financial resources, knowledge exchange and the promotion of research and information to be indispensable aspects of the Commission's proposals.

The Commission is called upon to:

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- carefully study, and to report to Parliament and the Council on, options for **payment for ecosystem services** that acknowledge their economic value and reward forest biodiversity conservation and the restoration of forest ecosystems;
- present a legislative proposal for **forest fire prevention**, incorporating funding for prevention plans and risk assessment, the European Forest Fires Information System (EFFIS), fire detection, infrastructure, training and education, and forest recovery after fires, including consideration of a 30-year ban on building on land where there has been a forest fire;
- submit a legislative proposal prohibiting building on land cleared by fires proven to have resulted from arson;
- present a legislative proposal on **forest information**, taking into account climate threats and the need for collection and dissemination of relevant, harmonised and comparable data on forest cover, biodiversity, biotic and abiotic threats and land use in the context of the UNFCCC, CBD and environmental accounts;
- compile and monitor **indicators** relating to the protective functions of forests such as soil retention and water capacity;
- support **research** into the influence of forests on regional weather patterns in the EU;
- develop and disseminate **best-practice guidelines** based on the principles of sustainable management to fit the needs of private and state owners as well as local communities, in order to ensure resilience to climate change;
- devise appropriate strategies for their protection, including the consideration of ‘Forest Heritage Observatories’.

Lastly, in order to achieve the objectives of the EU 2020 strategy with regard to national forest action plans, Parliament requests that each Member State or region develop a forest strategy which includes reafforestation of river banks, the capture of rainwater, agricultural activities and research results for selection of the traditional plant and tree varieties and species best adapted to drought.