

3 x 3 x 2030: Nine priorities for implementing the EU's Forest Strategy

In 2021, the European Union adopted the Forest Strategy for 2030 (FS), its third renewed commitment to forest policymaking across Europe. The strategy is largely based on the European Green Deal, which envisions forests playing a crucial role in a decarbonised society.

The strategy's key focuses include carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation and forest restoration. Its goal is to enhance both the quality and quantity of EU forests, boost their multifunctionality and resilience, and tackle challenges arising from intensified human activities, natural processes and climate change impacts.

Currently, the strategy's implementation is being reviewed and here key findings are summarised from an extensive report on the implementation of the EU Forest Strategy based on data from 15 countries in and outside the EU: AT, CZ, FI, DE, IE, IT, LT, NL, NO, NO, PO, RO, SK, SL, ES, SE (Pecurul-Botines et al. 2023 <https://doi.org/10.36333/fs15>).

Key findings from 15 countries on implementation

- **Diverse national priorities:** Northern and Central European countries with large forest sectors prioritize economic competitiveness and climate goals, showing partial resistance to FS measures emphasizing conservation and restoration.
- **Balancing goals:** Central and Eastern European countries increasingly link biodiversity and resilience with bioeconomy goals, aligning more closely with FS ambitions.
- **Adaption through rural development:** Southern and Western European countries integrate FS goals through rural and climate policies, often focusing on afforestation, fire prevention, and local development rather than industrial forestry.
- **Conflicts and different priorities:** Tensions arise between wood production and biodiversity protection, forest use and recreation, carbon storage in forests versus wood products, and expanding forest cover versus competing land uses.

Similarities in goal prioritisation at national levels are: Shared goals included developing the bioeconomy further, as well as achieving sustainable forest management and multifunctionality of forests. The interpretation of the latter two on how to do this differed across countries. In addition, increasing the resilience of forests and their adaptation to climate change was found salient everywhere, but restoration was not found to be a univocally pre-defined concept. Increasing the engagement of stakeholders and collaborative policymaking approaches was found to be a lower priority area.

Barriers for policy uptake are: (1) domestic forest policy developments; (2) power distribution between ministries, preexisting administrative structures and policy fragmentation; (3) lack of human resources and scarcity of public funding and finally (4) public opinion, citizens values and the role of media.

“3×3” key recommendations for policymakers:

I. Shared European direction

1. **Reconsider and agree on shared European key forest objectives.** Move beyond sectoral competition and fragmented policymaking by defining common priorities across EU and national forest agendas.
2. **Respect the diversity of forestry settings in Europe.** Design regionally adapted implementation pathways that reflect ecological and socio-economic realities.
3. **Strengthen the social licence for forest policy.** Involve diverse voices, including civil society, in decision-making at EU, national, and local levels.

II. Knowledge and innovation

1. **Invest in knowledge generation and communication.** Build a stronger evidence base and foster co-creation between science, forest practice, and society.

2. **Connect policy objectives to economic incentives.** Recognize that most European forests are privately owned; align policy goals with viable business models and income streams.
3. **Use climate change as leverage for transformation.** Turn the pressure of disturbances into an opportunity to invest in forest adaptation and renewal.

III. Governance and transparency

1. **Improve information on policy impacts.** Establish mechanisms to assess, compare, and adjust policies based on outcomes.
2. **Establish a dialogue between on forest governance.** Learn from diverse political and institutional traditions.
3. **Increase transparency at all levels.** Ensure open access to data and decisions so society can understand and evaluate forest contributions to sustainability.

Ensuring effective implementation depends on a robust shared EU policy framework that respects member states' distinct path dependencies and equips institutions to manage emerging conflicts—while also strengthening collaboration, transparency, and adaptive learning across governance levels.

¹Giurca, A., ¹Pülzl, H., ²Pecurul-Botines, M. and ³Winkel, G. 2025. 3 x 3 x 2030: Nine priorities for implementing the EU's Forest Strategy. EFI Policy Brief 17. European Forest Institute. <https://doi.org/10.36333/pb17>

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