



EC Guidelines on Closer to Nature Forest Management



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The Policy Context

EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030:

“To increase the quantity of forests and improve their health and resilience” [...] “biodiversity-friendly forestry practices such as closer to nature forestry should be further developed.”

“To support this, the Commission will develop guidelines on biodiversity-friendly afforestation and reforestation and closer-to-nature-forestry practices.”

New EU Forest Strategy for 2030:

“The Commission will develop a definition and adopt guidelines for closer-to-nature-forestry practices”

“a set of multiple practices to ensure multifunctional forests by combining biodiversity and increased carbon absorption with timber-related revenues”



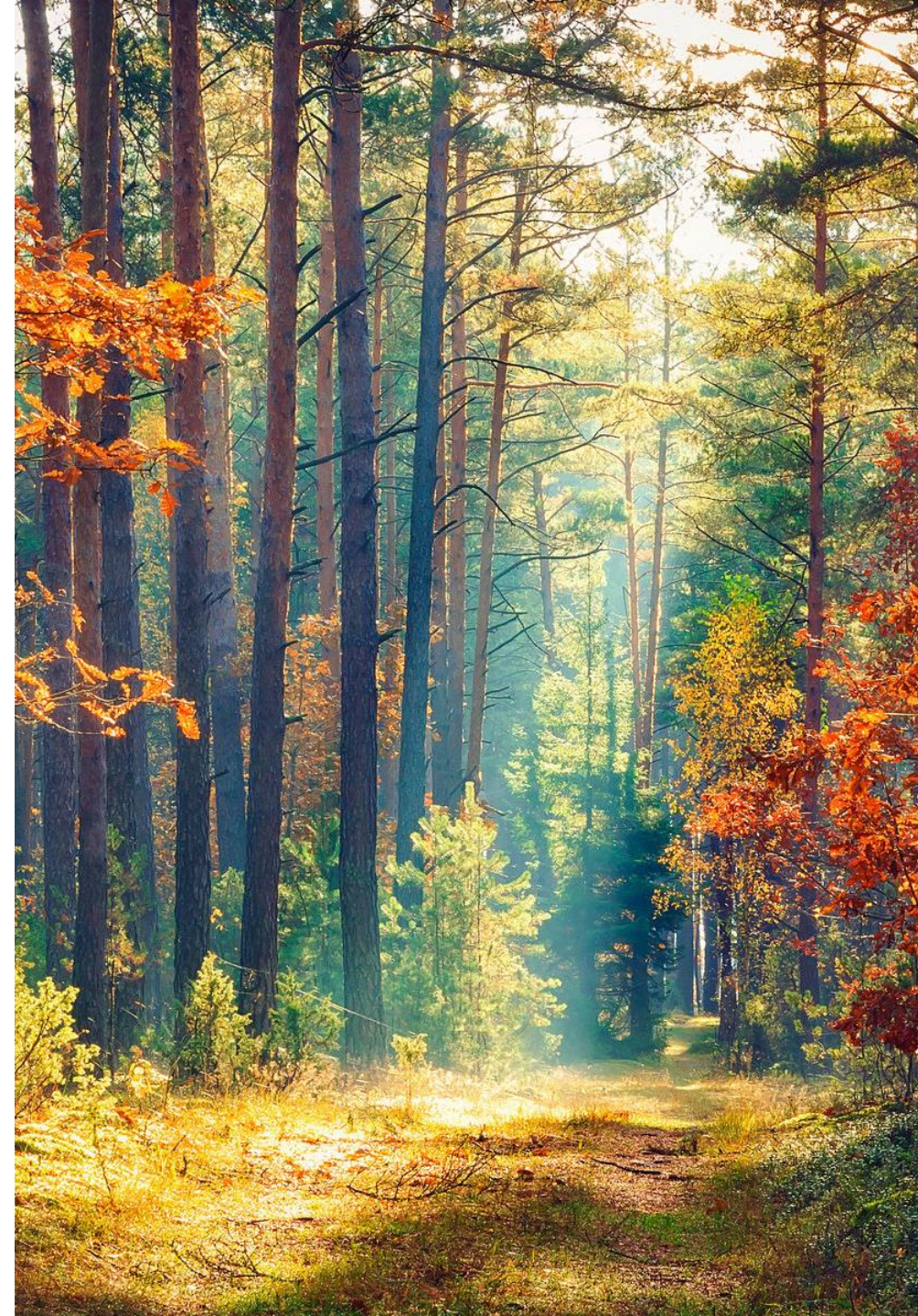


Guideline Development: **A collaborative and evidence-based approach**

- Prepared in active dialogue with Member States Experts and key stakeholders (Forest & Nature expert group, workshops, seminars)
- 3 years process, eight “rounds”
- Comprehensive literature review & expert input
- Voluntary character – designed to complement regulatory frameworks and trigger discussions for further developments at Member States level

Outline of the guidelines

- Rationale –*why these guidelines*
- Scope and Principles –*for whom and what*
- Toolbox –*how to do it*
- Critical Enablers – *making it happen*
- Regional Context – *challenges & opportunities*
- Good practice –*showcasing that it works*



The guidelines will...

- **promote biodiversity-friendly and adaptive forest management** for forest multifunctionality and climate change resilience without neglecting socio-economic benefits.
- **assist competent authorities and key stakeholders** across different scales, discussing challenges and opportunities in practice.

The guidelines are...

- developed for forests that have a **commercial use for timber and non-timber forest products** not explicitly designated as protected areas



Basic considerations



Closer-to-nature forest management (CNF):

“considers forests as ecosystems composed of a variety of organisms and abiotic elements above and below ground, all working together to constitute and maintain forest multifunctionality”

As a concept, CNF:

- integrates technical, economical, and social considerations
- is based on ecosystem dynamics
- focuses on safeguarding ecosystem functioning and resilience
- takes account of natural species succession dynamics and interactions of environmental factors

General principles



- Learning from and permitting natural processes to develop
- Maintain the heterogeneity and complexity of forest structures and patterns
- Integrate forest functions at different spatial scales
- Use a variety of silvicultural systems based on natural disturbance patterns of the region
- Low-impact timber harvesting with equal attention to what is retained in the forest as to what is removed, thereby preserving habitats, forest soil and microclimate

**Building on: Larsen, J.B.et al. 2022. Closer-to Nature Forest Management. From Science to Policy 12. EFI*

Main objectives



Enhance structural complexity

Closer-to-nature forest management strives to create forests that are more:

- Heterogeneous and diverse in height, diameter, age and species
- Mixed with denser and sparser parts

...according to their natural mix of species and structures, forest type and phase of development

Promote natural forest dynamics

Closer-to-nature forest management relies as much as possible on natural dynamics with:

...light interventions to orientate natural dynamics in line with objectives and the natural range and distribution of existing and potential species of the considered site

- Reduce investment costs (e.g. planting in the long-term)

Biodiversity benefits of various practices

Name	Main characteristics	Limitations
Close to Nature Silviculture	<p>Optimize forest ecosystem use and conservation for sustainability and profitability.</p> <p>Single-tree selection harvest</p> <p>Smaller group harvesting (<0.2ha) possible to create mosaic stands.</p>	<p>Risk of limited flexibility to ensure adaptive capacity of forest ecosystems in a changing climate subject to shifting ecological conditions and societal needs.</p>
Integrated forest management “INTEGRATE”:	<p>Combining ecosystem service provision in forest landscape</p> <p>Focus on aligning biodiversity conservation and sustainable wood production.</p>	<p>Forest biodiversity requires a comprehensive concept that combines segregative (protected areas/ no go-areas) and integrative (off-reserve) conservation instruments</p>
Continuous cover forestry	<p>Heterogenous forests by selecting and harvesting individual trees or groups of trees.</p> <p>Clear-felling is preferably limited to 0,25 ha to ensure continuity of woodland conditions.</p>	<p>Biodiversity benefits depend on the level of wood-harvest intensity and the combination with other measures like set-aside areas or dead-wood retention.</p>
Triad Management	<p>Forest organized in sectors with varying management intensities and integration levels.</p>	<p>Biodiversity benefits in practice not clear.</p> <p>Might undermine multifunctionality and resilience</p> <p>Difficult in mixed-ownership settings</p>
Silvo-pastoral systems/ Agro-forestry	<p>Combination of tree growing with agriculture on the same land.</p> <p>Valuable for biodiversity, including rare and endangered species and multifunctionality</p>	<p>Challenged by agricultural intensification and rural exodus restoration and maintenance of natural processes or low intensity management practices are required</p>
Retention Forestry	<p>Strengthen biodiversity in even-aged management and clearcutting systems by strengthening continuity in forest structure, composition, and complexity.</p> <p>Variable retention levels at landscape scale ensures structural diversity.</p>	<p>Actual benefit depends on position and volume of retention trees left in the stand</p> <p>Post-harvest mortality can be significant pending for example tree-species and diameter.</p> <p>Benefits for red-listed species not clear</p>

Closer to Nature Forest Management Toolbox

- Natural tree regeneration
 - Respectful harvest conditions
 - Minimize management interventions
 - Forest Soil and Water
- Optimizing Deadwood
 - Setting areas aside
 - Scale-specific approach
 - Managing ungulate species

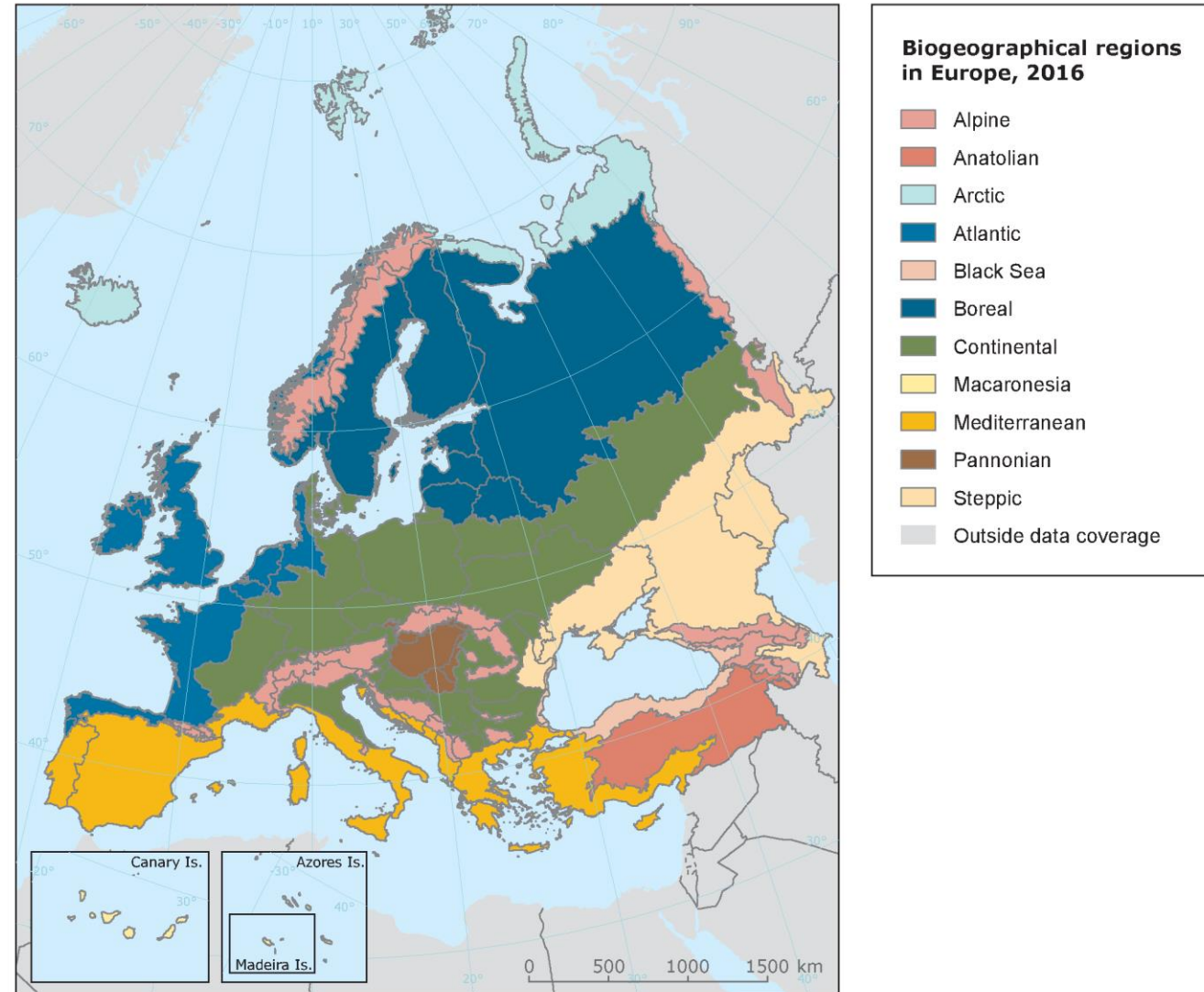
Enabling the Transition



- Training and Skills
 - Economic Viability
 - Mapping and Monitoring
- Planning the Transition
- Adaptive Management and Resilience
- Taking account of Forest Fires

Closer to Nature in different Regions

- Translate common objectives and principles into region-specific forestry reality
- Different region- different approach:
 - Case Studies
 - Parts of a Region
 - Region as a whole



Next steps: Outreach & Buy-in

Outreach:

- July 2023 –Guidelines in English
- November 2023 – Brochure Version
- Q1 2024 – all other EU languages
- Parallel presentation in meeting and seminars

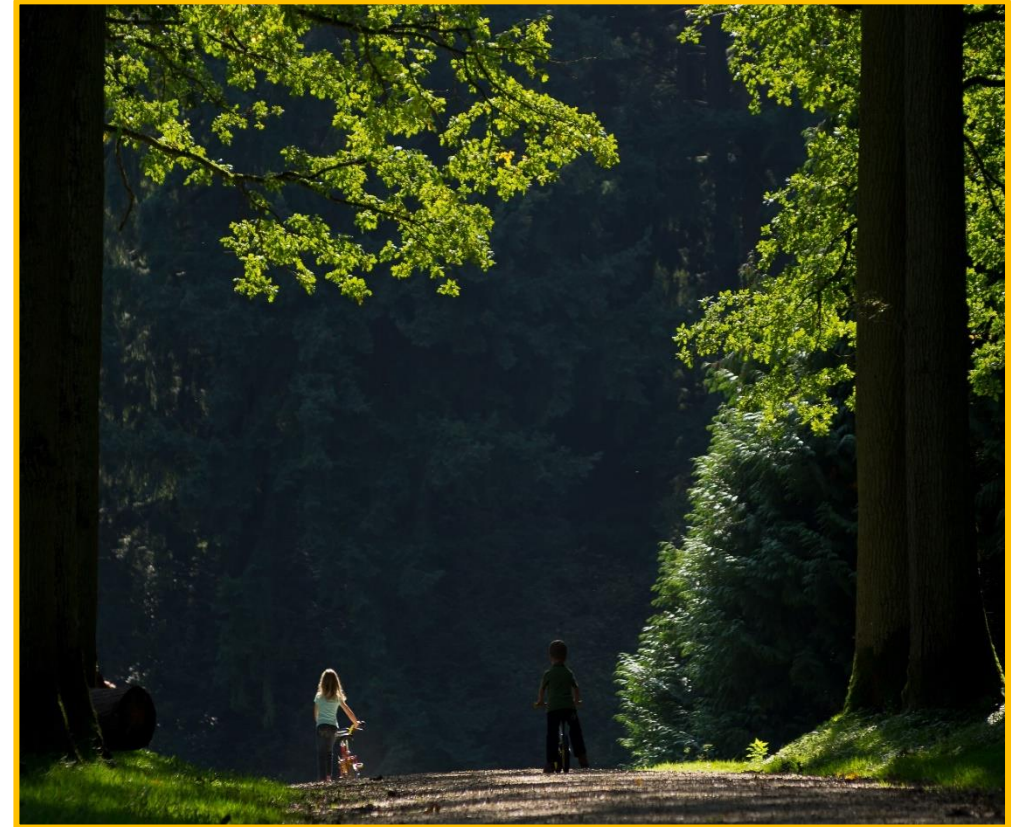
Buy-in:

- Voluntary approach
- Regional context
- Different starting points and no end-point



Next steps: From theory to practice

- Theory – all tools fully implemented
- Practice – different combinations and level of ambition
- Challenge – limited quantifiable references
- Solution – good practice, work in progress, CNF certification, SFM criteria



CNF guidelines as part of a package

- 1. Guidance on Payment for Ecosystem Service Schemes**
- 2. Legal proposal for EU framework for carbon removal certification**
- 3. Legislative proposal on EU Forest Observation, Reporting and Data Collection*
- 4. COM initiative for Voluntary Certification for Closer to Nature Forest Management*





Thank you for your attention