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## **REPORT**

on the implementation of a European Union forestry strategy  
(2005/2054(INI))

Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

Rapporteur: Heinz Kindermann

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## MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

### on the implementation of a European Union forestry strategy (2005/2054(INI))

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its resolution of 30 January 1997 on the European Union's forestry strategy<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 18 November 1998 on a forestry strategy for the European Union (COM(1998)0649),
- having regard to the Council resolution of 15 December 1998 on a forestry strategy for the European Union<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to the Court of Auditors' Special Report No 14/2000 on greening the CAP<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to the Commission communication to the Council and the European Parliament on the implementation of the EU forestry strategy (COM(2005)0084) and the attached staff working document on actions and activities implemented in the context of the EU forestry strategy in the period 1999-2004,
- having regard to the Court of Auditors' Special Report No 9/2004 on forestry measures within rural development policy<sup>4</sup>,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council of 30 May 2005 on the EU forest action plan,
- having regard to the study of 21 June 2005, called for by its committee responsible and drawn up by the Office National des Forêts (ONF, France), entitled 'European Forestry Strategy: outlook',
- having regard to the draft opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 12 September 2005 entitled 'Report on the implementation of the EU forestry strategy',
- having regard to the preliminary draft opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 4 August 2005 on the Commission communication to the Council and the European Parliament - report on the implementation of the EU forestry strategy,
- having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 55, 24.2.1997, p. 122.

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 56, 26.2.1999, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 353, 8.12.2000, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> OJ C 67, 18.3.2005, p. 1.

- having regard to the report of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development and the opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (A6-0015/2005),

### **Fundamental aspects**

- A. whereas the fundamental principles of the EU forestry strategy, i.e. sustainable forest management and preserving and strengthening the multifunctional role played by forests and by the wildlife that live there, including their contribution to biodiversity, on the basis of the subsidiarity principle, are not being called into question by the drafting of the 'EU Action Plan for Sustainable Forest Management' proposed by the Commission; whereas EU forestry strategy is a dynamic process open to the integration of fresh elements; whereas the EU action plan should be seen as a complementary instrument which will help ensure better coordination between the objectives and measures in the various fields of action,
- B. whereas, when it combines economic growth with important environmental values, such as sustaining the protective functions and biodiversity of forests, and rural development, forestry makes a particularly clear contribution to the attainment of several of the Lisbon and Göteborg objectives,
- C. whereas, even though neither the Treaty on European Union nor the draft treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe provide a legal basis for a common forestry policy, there is a wide range of Community policies which have since gained a constantly growing influence on forests,
- D. whereas in some cases the Member States use widely differing definitions of forests, which means that it is only partially possible to assess Community measures relevant to forests,
- E. whereas the basic perspective for all decision-making affecting European forests must be that European forests differ substantially from each other and face different environmental challenges,

### **Strategy element 1: Active participation in international processes relevant to forestry**

- F. whereas the Member States have responded to the Council's call for a European forestry strategy by actively participating in all international processes related to the forest sector,
- G. stressing the importance of intact forest ecosystems with a view to preserving biodiversity in accordance with commitments under international agreements; noting that examples of such commitments include the Biodiversity Convention (Rio, 1992) and the goal of halting the decline in the number of species by 2010 (EU meetings in Göteborg, 2001; Johannesburg 2002); observing that, in order to successfully fulfil these commitments, it is of the greatest importance to earmark sufficient areas as nature

reserves and to gear silvicultural methods, in conjunction with landscape planning, more fully to biological preconditions.

**Strategy element 2: Implementation of national forestry programmes in order to comply with international commitments entered into**

- H. whereas national and subnational forest programmes (NFPs) represent the key instrument for implementing the objectives of the EU forestry strategy and are designed to guarantee coordination and coherence between national political guidelines and international commitments,

**Strategy element 3: Improving coordination, communication and cooperation in all fields of policy of relevance to forestry**

- J. whereas nothing has changed with regard to the fundamental need, already highlighted in 1998, for better coordination, communication and cooperation in all Community policy sectors which are relevant to the forestry sector (agricultural, environmental, energy, research, industry, internal market, trade and development policy) within the Commission, between the Commission and the Member States and among the Member States,

**Strategy element 4: Promoting sustainable forest management as part of policy on conserving and developing rural areas**

- K. whereas rural development policy is the main instrument for implementing the forestry strategy at Community level, which can also be seen from the fact that EUR 4.8 billion was made available for forestry measures in the context of rural development policy between 2000 and 2006, half of which was used for the afforestation of farmland and half for other forest management measures,

**Strategy element 5: Protecting Europe's forests**

- L. whereas forest management must be economically, ecologically, socially and culturally sustainable and whereas protecting forests, monitoring forest health, restoring damaged forests and safeguarding the environmental benefits, in particular regulation of the water cycle, are key elements of sustainable forest management; whereas a key aim with regard to forests is preserving forest health and vitality by protecting them against forest fires and atmospheric pollution, as well as against soil and water pollution and other damage caused by disease, pests and erosion,
- M. whereas the aim should be to guarantee biodiversity in forest areas and ensure the regulation and sustainable use of the wildlife which naturally colonises such habitats, so as to secure the long-term presence of such species, with due regard for the balance between forests and game,
- N. whereas, nevertheless, the fire-prevention measures provided for in rural development policy are proving insufficient to tackle the phenomenon of forest fires, which is the main cause of forest deterioration in the European Union and one of the reasons for the

accelerated desertification affecting many European regions; also regretting the lack of coordination between programmes implemented at regional or national level, coordination of which should be stepped up by drawing up a set of strategic Community guidelines with a view to dovetailing the preventive measures taken by different national and/or local government authorities; whereas the Commission should recommend to each region that it draw up a comprehensive strategy to combat fires and that they work together with the Member States; whereas such a strategy must cover the relationship between agriculture and the forest environment, the risks in the area and the preventive measures to address these risks,

- O. drawing attention to the regions repeatedly affected by large-scale forest fires and expressing its solidarity with those regions; whereas it is important, however, to note that there are considerable differences between the Member States in relation to problems with forest fires and the conditions under which they can be fought; whereas experience shows that local involvement and local engagement is crucial to successfully preventing and fighting forest fires and changing forestry practices away from fire-prone monocultures, especially of eucalyptus,
- P. whereas the new financial instrument for the environment (LIFE+) is vital in order to protect all Europe's forests through measures to monitor and avert the contributory factors involved in their deterioration, including fires,

#### **Strategy element 6: Protecting tropical forests**

- Q. whereas illegal logging of tropical timber causes serious ecological, economic and social damage not only in the countries of origin but also in countries in temperate zones, since it gives rise to significant distortions on the market for wood products,
- R. welcoming the Commission's FLEGT (European Union's Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade) action plan which was set up to combat the problems associated with illegal logging; whereas illegal logging creates serious environmental and social problems as well as an imbalance of trade in timber and financial losses for the forest industry; whereas, in order to make progress in combating trade in illegally logged timber, it is of crucial importance that the factors underlying the problem, such as lack of clarity about ownership, corruption and poverty, are eliminated; whereas it is important, furthermore, that there should be serious sanctions and punishments for people and businesses that deal in illegally logged timber,
- S. whereas much of the wood imported into the European Union comes in the form of processed products, some of which are derived from wood which has been sourced illegally; whereas the Commission, in order to facilitate prohibition of such illegally-sourced imports, should consider modifying the EC Customs Code and non-preferential rules of origin applying to timber so that the last country in which the processing of products made out of extractive natural resources takes place should be obliged to prove the origin and the legality of the raw materials,

### **Strategy element 7: Mitigating climate change and contributing to sustainable energy supplies**

- T. whereas, with reference to the fact that carbon is stored in biomass and soil, forests fulfil an important function as carbon sink in the carbon cycle of the earth; whereas the guarantee of their regeneration, the preservation of their productivity and the intensified use of carbon-neutral forest products ensure and extend the carbon cycle; whereas forests provide renewable and carbon-neutral energy and contribute to the sustainable energy-mix of the EU and forests and their products thus contribute towards slowing down global warming and the greenhouse effect and fulfilling the environmental objectives of the EU (e.g. the Kyoto Protocol),
- U. whereas strengthening the use of renewable energies based on forestry products will also help to offset the European Union's energy deficit and boost the production of energy crops as a substitute or alternative for areas producing surpluses or affected by specific COM reforms,

### **Strategy element 8: Promoting competitiveness, employment and income in the forest-based sector**

- V. whereas the forestry sector and wood industry has not been given a sufficiently high profile in Community economic development policy up to now but is still seen as a subsidiary area, even though this sector creates a large number of jobs, achieves a significant turnover and has an extremely positive impact on the viability of rural areas,
- W. whereas forests provide environmental benefits of prime importance for the quality of life, as well as agri-forestry products which are of major economic importance,
- X. whereas the Commission recognises the multifunctional role of forests, but whereas in the majority of cases that role, measured against the potential it offers, is not reflected in the economy of the areas concerned or in the income of their inhabitants,
- Y. whereas, therefore, good conditions for forestry and strong awareness of the various simultaneous goals of forest management are important if the Union is to achieve several of its environmental objectives,

### **Strategy element 9: Promoting forest-related research and development**

- Z. whereas the forestry sector can meet the challenges facing it in terms of competitiveness and sustainable development only if it succeeds in developing new and innovative concepts and technologies for its activities, and only if it is protected from the imposition of disproportionate conditions hindering its economic effectiveness,
- AA. stressing the importance of diverse timber research in attaining the European Union's objectives regarding competitiveness and the environment; observing that, as a raw material, wood contains many properties, such as chemicals, which have previously

remained unexploited and that adequate resources should be invested in research into and in the development of market applications for such properties; whereas increasing the use of wood, for example in the construction, paper, packaging and energy sectors, can contribute to replacing the use of non-renewable natural resources,

- AB. whereas new ways of preventing and extinguishing fires using satellites and other state-of-the-art technology should be developed and researched and used not only in forests, but also to provide civil protection for the general public,

**Strategy element 10: Promoting sustainable forest management by means of training and further training programmes**

- AC. whereas to date the forest-based sector has hardly been taken into account in European training and further training programmes,

**Strategy element 11: Promoting sustainable forest management by means of information and communication strategies**

- AD. whereas hitherto the EU's forestry strategy has taken far too little advantage of the European Union's potential for supporting sustainable forest management by means of information and communication strategies,

**Fundamental aspects**

1. Endorses the Commission's view that the further development of Community policies due to the decisions taken at the Lisbon (2000) and Göteborg (2001) summits, the 6th Environment Action Programme (2002), the CAP reform (2003) and enlargement (2004) suggests the need for the European Forestry Strategy to be more integrated with European policies as a whole; supports therefore the Commission's proposal to draw up an 'EU Action Plan for Sustainable Forest Management', which should operate for a five-year period; stresses that the drafting of the Action Plan should be closely coordinated with Member States and regions and carried out in consultation with the relevant stakeholder organisations; the European Forestry Strategy has created the reference framework for forestry-related policies, initiatives and measures and influences the way in which forestry issues are now discussed; the changes described in the policy context make a more coherent, active approach to managing the Community's forestry resources necessary;
2. Considers that, 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 Treaties of the European Union or in a future draft Constitution; calls for the subsidiarity principle to be taken into account to a special degree in all legal acts affecting forests, as long as the European Union lacks a separate legal basis for forests;

3. Calls on the Member States and Commission to seek to arrive at a mutual understanding and uniform interpretation of the concept 'forest' so as to make it easier than hitherto to assess Community forestry measures;

**Strategy element 1: Active participation in international processes relevant to forestry**

4. Welcomes 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 have arrived at a common vision of sustainable forest management, and proposes that this should be taken into account more fully in the political decision-making process;
5. Welcomes the Member States' active involvement in all international processes with a bearing on the forestry sector and points out that at the Johannesburg World Development Summit in 2002 it was stressed that sustainable forestry is one tool for turning the other millennium goals into reality; furthermore stresses the fact that the governments of the participating countries committed themselves to a binding action plan with many forestry-related elements;
6. Calls on the Commission and the Member States, in connection with the Sixth Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) in February 2006, to implement the Council conclusions of 26 April 2005, from which it follows that a legally binding instrument is the best means of ensuring sustainable forest management in its environmental and social dimensions;
7. Stresses that the European Union should take a coordinated and congruent approach in international and Community environmental policy, in which the multifunctional role of forests is taken into account and respected; in this connection those concerned should be fully involved and an open information policy should be followed;

**Strategy element 2: Implementation of national forestry programmes in order to comply with international commitments entered into**

8. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to apply the approach developed at the MCPFE as a uniform instrument for national forestry programmes and to adopt assessment criteria for it in order to facilitate an evaluation of the attainment of objectives;

**Strategy element 3: Improving coordination, communication and cooperation in all fields of policy of relevance to forestry**

9. Considers that, despite the progress made by setting up an inter-departmental working party at the Commission (the Inter-Service Group on Forestry), it is essential for the coordination between the various Directorates-General concerned with forestry issues to be further improved; proposes that, 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; suggests that a structural unit within the Commission Secretariat be designated to coordinate forestry-related policies;

10. Proposes that the Standing Forestry Committee be strengthened by extending its remit and giving it a practical dimension, for instance in the context of the establishment and evaluation of the action plans and the evaluation of the national forestry programmes;

**Strategy element 4: Promoting sustainable forest management as part of policy on conserving and developing rural areas**

11. Considers, furthermore, that effective monitoring systems should be established for forestry measures to be implemented by Member States with cofinancing from the European Union pursuant to Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 of 17 May 1999 on support for rural development, in which connection the recommendations of the Court of Auditors concerning the implementation of the Forestry Strategy should be acted upon;
12. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to take increased account of the objectives and measures of the EU forestry strategy and the EU action plan for sustainable forest management when drawing up their corresponding rural development programmes;

**Strategy element 5: Protecting Europe's forests**

13. Calls on the Commission and Member States to include in the EU Action Plan for Sustainable Forest Management effective measures to avert dangers and cope with serious disasters (fires, storms, insect infestations and drought); reminds the Member States to implement the measures to prevent forest fires provided for in rural development programmes;
14. Stresses that the EU action plan for sustainable forest management, in the sense of the multifunctional role of forests, must pay more attention to protecting the soil, water and air and also biodiversity and typical forest landscapes;
15. Considers that in mountain areas endeavours should be made to encourage the separation between forests and grazing land and to introduce the requirement to use paths (not least for safety reasons in general), because a lack of separation between forests and grazing land and too much pedestrian traffic causes substantial erosion damage;
16. Calls for a recommendation to be drawn up addressed to the Member States and aimed at suggesting an integrated approach to protecting forests against fires, with measures such as the harvesting and utilisation of residual forest biomass, a temporary ban on changes in the use of burnt land to prevent speculation following fires, and the creation of special prosecution services for environmental offences;
17. Calls, with a view to the next financial programming period, for the Member States and European regions to revise their fire-fighting and fire-prevention measures so as to

update and revitalise the measures in force, whose management is proving inadequate in many cases;

18. Stresses that reforestation is a fundamental instrument in combating desertification; points out that reforestation with native species helps to maintain biodiversity, reduces the risk of fire and may help to protect and link up areas bordering sites listed in the Natura 2000 network, thereby enabling the spread of biodiversity;

#### **Strategy element 6: Protecting tropical forests**

19. Supports the current FLEGT action plan initiatives to combat illegal logging and enforce international agreements;

#### **Strategy element 7: Mitigating climate change and contributing to sustainable energy supplies**

20. Considers it vital that the importance of forests and forestry products in mitigating climate change should be recognised and that the European Union should promote research, activities to promote the image of wood and exchanges of information in this field; calls on the Commission and the Member States, as part of the EU's forest strategy, to explore concepts which will optimise the contribution of the forestry sector to combating climate change, against the backdrop of its competitiveness;
21. Urges the European Union to promote the use of wood as a renewable resource and the use of forest industry products as environmentally friendly;
22. Calls for biomass, particularly from wood, to be fully included in political measures to develop renewable energy sources (CHP, biofuels); asks the Member States to assess the possibilities of tax concessions for wood-based heating;

#### **Strategy element 8: Promoting competitiveness, employment and income in the forest-based sector**

23. Stresses the conclusions of the Commission's analysis of the competitiveness of forestry in the European Union, according to which it is desirable to promote the coordination of policy on forestry and the remainder of the wood/paper production chain; welcomes the fact that incentives to encourage voluntary mergers between smaller forestry businesses have been provided at national and Community level; also points out that if private forestry organisations were strengthened, this would help private forest owners, in particular, in developing their own sustainable forest management;
24. Calls on the Commission to support the Member States' efforts to mobilise wood resources in forests and to overcome the structural disadvantages of smaller forestry undertakings in relation to the utilisation and marketing of their forestry products, in order to ensure the Community's long-term self-supply with regard to wood and wood products; considers, in particular, that certain obstacles to the use of wood should be removed and consideration should be given to the rules and standards governing

research and development in relation to innovative uses of wood and measures to boost the skills profile; emphasises the sources of income, only partly used hitherto, offered by non-wood forest products such as cork, mushrooms and berries and the provision of services such as nature tourism and hunting, whereby game management plays a role which should not be neglected in the context of income diversification in some of the Member States within the meaning of Article 33, indents 4, 5, 7, 9, 10 and 11 of Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999;

25. Calls on the Commission and Member States to include in the EU Action Plan for Sustainable Forest Management effective measures to avert dangers and cope with serious disasters (fires, storms, insect infestations); reminds the Member States to implement the measures to prevent forest fires provided for in rural development programmes and considers it vital that the EU Action Plan for Sustainable Forest Management should cover the whole value chain from forests to wood and forest industry products;
26. Calls on the Commission to take account of the economic potential for afforestation of each region's native species, as well as the potential of natural forests and all the environmental products and benefits they provide for rural areas; considers that, to this end, a study should be made of the necessary measures to support producers;
27. Calls on the Commission to 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; takes the view that 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;
28. Considers that the provision of support, particularly to promote environmental conservation measures and rural areas, should not be made dependent on the form of ownership of the forests concerned, and that all forests should be treated equally;

#### **Strategy element 9: Promoting forest-related research and development**

29. Calls for an increase in promotion of forest-related research and development work and that related to its multifunctional role, particularly with regard to the sustainable development of biodiversity, by including key forestry research projects in the 7th EU Framework Programme of Research or in the corresponding programmes in the Member States, and by supporting the forests/wood/paper technology platform which has already been launched;

#### **Strategy element 10: Promoting sustainable forest management by means of training and further training programmes**

30. Calls on the Member States, in particular, to ensure that European training and further training programmes (Leonardo, Erasmus, etc.) provided by the European Union are put to more use than hitherto in the forest-based sector;
31. Underlines that the support of forest owners in terms of education, capacity building, information activity and advisory services will be a prerequisite for the sustainable use of forests in the context of rural development;

**Strategy element 11: Promoting sustainable forest management by means of information and communication strategies**

32. Welcomes the efforts of European forestry undertakings to give consumers assurances concerning sustainable forest management which takes account of the multifunctional role of forests, notably by means of certified wood products; considers the FSC and PEFC certification systems to be equally suitable for this purpose; calls for mutual recognition of the two certification initiatives to be promoted;
33. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission.

## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

On 10 March 2005 the Commission submitted to the Council and the European Parliament a communication on the implementation of the EU Forestry Strategy between 1999 and 2004, which it did in response to the Council's request<sup>1</sup> of 15 December 1998. In the communication the Commission proposes drawing up an EU Action Plan for Sustainable Forest Management. By means of this own-initiative report, the European Parliament seeks to support a continuation and intensification of the process whose initiation it prompted in 1997.

Since the turn of the millennium, the European Union has adopted ambitious goals. At the Göteborg and Lisbon summits, the Community set the bar for the development of its economies very high. What contribution can Europe's forests, the people whose lives or livelihoods are bound up with them, and the forest-based industry make to competitiveness, a dynamic knowledge-based society and sustainable development? What point is there in the Commission's launching yet another strategy and drawing up yet another action plan? Moreover, what point is there in doing this in a field of policy in which the Treaties do not confer any powers on the Commission? There has never been a common European forestry policy. However, besides specific measures to protect forests, there are numerous measures which are relevant to forests, i.e. which have been devised as part of a wide range of different EU policies over the decades and which have an impact on forests and their owners. There is no common forestry policy comparable to the common agricultural policy, nor is there ever intended to be. So what purpose is served by an EU Forestry Strategy or an EU Action Plan for Sustainable Forest Management?

In order to answer these justified questions, the regional, ecological, economic and employment-policy significance of the forest-based sector will be briefly outlined below. In many cases, political initiatives - particularly in the European Union - can only be understood in the light of their historical context. With this in mind, the second section will try to give an account of the principal stages in the development of forestry policy in the European Union. The third section will propose a possible classification of elements from the EU Forestry Strategy; this classification also provides the structure for the resolution in this report.

### **The significance of forestry in the EU**

In the present-day EU, there are 148 million hectares of forest. 85% of this area is managed. Unlike what is happening in many tropical regions of the world, Europe's forests are actually expanding, by 450 000 ha per annum. The European Union's forests are ecologically very diverse. Europe has a long tradition of sustainable forest management; the concept of sustainability, which entered the general political vocabulary as a result of the Brundtland Report published in 1987, has its origins in European forest management. Forestry makes a substantial contribution to the protection of biodiversity in Europe.

Some 60% of the EU's forests are the property of around 15 million private owners. On average, each of them has 13 hectares, but in fact most privately owned woods are smaller than 3 hectares. As a result of the latest enlargement of the EU, a significantly larger

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<sup>1</sup> Council Resolution of 15 December 1998, OJ C 56, 26.2.1999, p. 1.

proportion of the total area of woodland is now state-owned. The whole forest/wood/paper production chain (the forest-based sector) employs around 3.5 million people - 4.3% of all employees in the primary sector and 3.7% of those in the secondary sector. It thus makes a vital contribution to social cohesion and improving the quality of life, particularly in rural areas.

## **Historical background**

### ***Legal bases***

After the foundation of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, the possible inclusion of wood in the so-called 'Annex II list' appended to the EEC Treaty was very intensively debated. Then as now, forestry operators had strong reservations about public intervention, as a result of which wood was not included as a product subject to common organisation of the market. To this day, there is no original legal basis for a common forestry policy. All measures which have been implemented by the EU in the European forestry sector since 1958 have therefore taken their legal basis from the fields of agricultural, environmental, regional or trade policy.

### ***The stages of European policy on forests***

#### **Unsystematic beginnings (1964-1985)**

In the period from 1964 to 1978, the Community adopted a series of measures to develop forestry. The Commission communication of 1964 on the coordination of countries' forestry policy proposed that a common forestry policy should be formulated. It was there that the Commission first drew a distinction between a common and a coordinated forestry policy.

In 1974 the Commission made proposals for a 'directive on forestry', which provided for the setting-up of a standing forestry committee. The Commission's ideas did not gain the support of a majority within the Council. A motion for a resolution on the objectives of and guidelines for Community policy on the timber sector, of 1983, was likewise rejected.

During this period the Commission's legislative work in the field of forestry was confined, for example, to measures to harmonise domestic legislation (1966), an attempt to standardise unfinished wood (1971) or increased plant protection (1977).

#### **Cautious coordination of efforts (1986-1992)**

The forestry memorandum presented in 1986 marked a turning point towards a goal-directed, systematic Community forestry policy. The Commission set out the aims and principles of European forestry policy, initially restricting its proposals for Community measures in this field to coordination. As a specific measure, the Regulation on the protection of forests against atmospheric pollution was adopted.

A further unambiguous step towards greater Community involvement in forestry policy was the adoption by the Council in 1989 of an action programme for forestry. Most of the elements were in some way linked to agriculture, but certain measures relating purely to

forestry were also included. The principal components of the programme were: the setting-up of a Standing Forestry Committee, promotion of afforestation of agricultural land, the cork programme, the programme to protect forests against air pollution and the European Forestry Information and Communication System. This first action programme for forests was supplemented in 1992 by a Regulation on the protection of forests against fire and in 1994 by the Regulation on the genetic resources of forests. Other decisions, adopted as support measures for the CAP reform (1992), have the aim of supporting forestry as part of farming.

### **Inception of the EU Forestry Strategy (1992-1998)**

Ultimately, it was the European Parliament which set the ball rolling towards an intensification of forestry measures and a new direction for them. In 1992 it published a handbook on the common forestry policy and in 1993 it commissioned a thorough study of the forestry sector in Europe and worldwide ('Eurofor'). In the first own-initiative report in the history of the European Parliament, rapporteur Thomas called in 1997 for a strategic strengthening of the European Union's forestry policy. The Commission communication<sup>1</sup> submitted in response to this and the Council resolution<sup>2</sup> published at the end of 1998 led to the 'EU Forestry Strategy' which is now to be evaluated.

### **Implementation of the EU Forestry Strategy (1999-2005)**

The Commission communication of 10 March 2005 reflects the processes and experiences of the first stage of implementation of this EU Forestry Strategy. It is difficult to give a definitive assessment of the success of the strategy at this point. It is in the nature of strategies that they are difficult to evaluate without a specific formulation of objectives and corresponding sets of measures. All the greater, therefore, is the importance attached to the Commission's proposal to organise a structured dialogue with the Member States and the parties concerned in order to adopt a coherent approach.

### **Strategy elements of an EU Action Plan for Sustainable Forest Management**

On 30 May 2005 the Agriculture Council asked the Commission to draw up in close cooperation an EU Action Plan for Sustainable Forest Management and submit it to the Council by mid-2006. Both the general review of Community policies decided upon at Lisbon in 2000 and Göteborg in 2001 and reforms of forest-relevant Community policies (the 6th Environment Action Programme and CAP reform) and - not the least important point - the enlargement of the EU make it desirable to adopt a coherent and goal-directed approach to implementing the EU Forestry Strategy. The rapporteur therefore supports the Commission's proposal to draft an EU Action Plan on Sustainable Forest Management. In order to support the work already under way, the European Parliament therefore hereby presents its suggestions, classified as follows:

Strategy element 1: Active participation in international processes relevant to forestry

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<sup>1</sup> Communication to the Council and the European Parliament on a forestry strategy for the European Union, COM(1998)0649, 18 November 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Council resolution of 15 December 1998, OJ C 56, 26.2.1999, p. 1.

- Strategy element 2: Implementation of national forestry programmes in order to comply with international commitments entered into
- Strategy element 3: Improving coordination, communication and cooperation in all fields of policy of relevance to forestry
- Strategy element 4: Promoting sustainable forest management as part of policy on conserving and developing rural areas
- Strategy element 5: Protecting Europe's forests
- Strategy element 6: Protecting tropical forests
- Strategy element 7: Mitigating climate change and contributing to sustainable energy supplies
- Strategy element 8: Promoting competitiveness, employment and income in the forest-based sector
- Strategy element 9: Promoting forest-related research and development
- Strategy element 10: Promoting sustainable forest management by means of training and further training programmes
- Strategy element 11: Promoting sustainable forest management by means of information and communication strategies

## **Conclusions**

What contribution can the forestry sector make to the attainment of the Lisbon and Göteborg objectives? Forestry has considerable potential: at present, only around 60% of the annual growth of Europe's forests is exploited. Europe's timber industry is globally competitive, and the forest/wood/paper production chain is an important source of employment in rural areas.

If those involved in the further development and implementation of the EU Forestry Strategy and the EU Forest Action Plan constantly bear in mind that a measure ought to be implemented at Community level only if this will have a clear-cut advantage, the prospects are favourable for progress for all concerned. The fear that the EU may pursue a forestry policy without having been given a remit to do so and without an appropriate legal basis seems unfounded. In view of the open, dynamic structure of the measures described, the rapporteur considers that on the contrary the focus should be on the opportunity for all concerned to help determine European policy. The forest-based sector can certainly make a contribution to the attainment of the Lisbon and Göteborg objectives.

24.11.2005

## **OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY**

for the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

on the implementation of a European Union forestry strategy  
(2005/2054(INI))

Draftsman: Christofer Fjellner

### **SUGGESTIONS**

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety calls on the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Notes the Commission's proposal to introduce an action plan for sustainable forestry and stresses that the EU's responsibility in the field of forestry policy is and should remain very limited; stresses that the basic perspective for all decision-making affecting European forests must be that European forests differ substantially from each other and face different environmental challenges; considers, therefore, that the EU action plan for sustainable forestry must be consistent with the international commitments of the EU and its Member States, and be drawn up with the subsidiarity principle to the fore and be based on the national forestry programmes. The forestry sector will not contribute further to the loss and fragmentation of habitats and compromise the attainment of the EU objective to halt biodiversity loss by 2010.
2. Stresses that the EU should not develop a common forestry policy.
3. Stresses the multi-functional role of forests; points out that when economic growth is combined with important environmental values, such as sustaining the protective functions and biodiversity of forests, and rural development, forestry makes a particularly clear contribution to the attainment of several of the Lisbon and Göteborg objectives; takes the view, therefore, that good conditions for forestry and strong awareness of the various simultaneous goals of forest management are important if the Union is to achieve several of its environmental objectives.
4. Notes that the EU already takes many political decisions which directly or indirectly affect European forests and forestry but that coordination by the Commission between

various areas of policy concerning forests has many shortcomings; notes that this situation has been to the detriment of compatibility between different environmental objectives and of the conditions for forestry; considers therefore that the Commission's most important task should be to coordinate existing forestry policy and, in future, to carry out assessments in advance with a view to taking account, at an early stage, of how various political decisions affect European forests and forestry; considers, therefore, that the Standing Forestry Committee should be strengthened and given responsibility for implementing the proposed action plan. Observes that Natura 2000, the EU's network for safeguarding biodiversity and conservation of species, is an important element in the EU's green infrastructure.

5. Welcomes the Commission's FLEGT action plan which was set up to combat the problems associated with illegal logging; considers that illegal logging creates serious environmental and social problems as well as an imbalance of trade in timber and financial losses for the forest industry; considers that, in order to make progress in combating trade in illegally logged timber, it is of crucial importance that the factors underlying the problem, such as lack of clarity about ownership, corruption and poverty, are eliminated; considers it important, furthermore, that there should be serious sanctions and punishments for people and businesses that deal in illegally logged timber.
6. Stresses the importance of intact forest ecosystems with a view to preserving biodiversity in accordance with commitments under international agreements; notes that examples of such commitments include the Biodiversity Convention (Rio, 1992) and the goal of halting the decline in the number of species by 2010 (EU meetings in Göteborg, 2001; Johannesburg 2002); observes that, in order to successfully fulfil these commitments, it is of the greatest importance to earmark sufficient areas as nature reserves and to gear silvicultural methods, in conjunction with landscape planning, more fully to biological preconditions.
7. Notes that much of the wood imported into the EU comes in the form of processed products, some of which are derived from wood which has been sourced illegally; asks the Commission, in order to facilitate prohibition of such illegally-sourced imports, to consider modifying the EC Customs Code and non-preferential rules of origin applying to timber so that the last country in which the processing of products made out of extractive natural resources takes place should be obliged to prove the origin and the legality of the raw materials.
8. Stresses that wood, as a raw material, has unique properties which make it a genuinely renewable and recoverable natural resource; points out that increasing the use of wood, for example in the construction, paper, packaging and energy sectors, can contribute to replacing the use of non-renewable natural resources and expand the carbon cycle; considers, therefore, that sustainable use of wood with due respect for biodiversity and social equity can play a part in the EU's ability to fulfil its commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol.
9. Stresses the importance of diverse timber research in attaining the European Union's objectives regarding competitiveness and the environment; observes that, as a raw material, wood contains many properties, such as chemicals, which have previously

remained unexploited and that adequate resources should be invested in research into and in the development of market applications for such properties.

10. Draws attention to the regions repeatedly affected by large-scale forest fires and expresses its solidarity with those regions; considers it important, however, to note that there are considerable differences between the Member States in relation to problems with forest fires and the conditions under which they can be fought; stresses that, experience shows that local involvement and local engagement is crucial to successfully preventing and fighting forest fires and changing forestry practices away from fire-prone monocultures, especially of eucalyptus.
11. Points out that, currently, most EU fire prevention funding is granted via the rural development policy; regrets the lack of coordination between programmes implemented at regional or national level; believes that it is necessary to step up such coordination by drawing up a set of strategic Community guidelines with a view to dovetailing the preventive measures taken by different national and/or local government authorities.
12. Calls on the Commission to recommend to each region that it draw up a comprehensive strategy to combat fires and that they work together with the Member States; believes that such a strategy must cover the relationship between agriculture and the forest environment, the risks in the area and the preventive measures to address these risks.
13. Asks that new ways of preventing and extinguishing fires using satellites and other state-of-the-art technology be developed and researched and used not only in forests, but also to provide civil protection for the general public.
14. Stresses the important role of Natura 2000, the EU's network which safeguards biological diversity and the conservation of species; considers that the success of Natura 2000 and other efforts to promote biological diversity is dependent on forest owners' commitment to take into account the conservation needs of their forests.
15. Emphasises the need to improve the balance between the economic, social and environmental aspects of forest functions, and notes that poor governance in the forestry sector has led to social conflicts with forest-dependent peoples, in particular the Sámi community; therefore stresses the need to involve all stakeholders, including local people, in forest management; further considers that urgent measures are needed to protect the customary land rights and way of life of forest-dependent peoples in Europe.
16. Notes that the new financial instrument for the environment (LIFE+) is vital in order to protect all Europe's forests through measures to monitor and avert the contributory factors involved in their deterioration, including fires.

## PROCEDURE

<b>Title</b>	On the implementation of an EU Forestry Strategy
<b>Procedure number</b>	2005/2054(INI)
<b>Committee responsible</b>	AGRI
<b>Committee asked for its opinion</b> Date announced in plenary	ENVI 12.5.2005
<b>Enhanced cooperation</b>	
<b>Draftsman</b> Date appointed	Christofer Fjellner 24.5.2005
<b>Discussed in committee</b>	3.10.2005    22.11.2005
<b>Date suggestions adopted</b>	22.11.2005
<b>Result of final vote</b>	for:                    39 against:                0 abstentions:            1
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Adamos Adamou, Georgs Andrejevs, Hiltrud Breyer, Dorette Corbey, Chris Davies, Avril Doyle, Mojca Drčar Murko, Edite Estrela, Matthias Groote, Françoise Grossetête, Cristina Gutiérrez-Cortines, Satu Hassi, Mary Honeyball, Dan Jørgensen, Christa Klaß, Eija-Riitta Korhola, Urszula Krupa, Peter Liese, Roberto Musacchio, Riitta Myller, Péter Olajos, Vittorio Prodi, Frédérique Ries, Guido Sacconi, Carl Schlyter, Richard Seeber, Jonas Sjöstedt, Bogusław Sonik, María Sornosa Martínez, Thomas Ulmer, Anja Weisgerber, Åsa Westlund
<b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>	David Casa, Christofer Fjellner, Milan Gaľa, Dariusz Maciej Grabowski, Karsten Friedrich Hoppenstedt, Anne Laperrouze, Robert Sturdy, Andres Tarand.
<b>Substitutes under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote</b>	

