



European Network of Forested Regions Regions' views on EU's forestry-related policy initiatives

Established in 2012, ERIAFF is an informal network of Regions that seeks to promote collaborations for the development of the interregional dimension of the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI).

The European Network of Forested Regions is the ERIAFF thematic group that brings together regions and forestry operators committed to promote both the innovation in forest-based sectors and the development of forest policies at European and regional levels. It is also a platform to provide information and coordinate the feedback to upcoming EU initiatives relevant for regions interested in the forest sector.

Despite forestry policy not exactly being within the jurisdiction of the European Union, in recent years the EU has undertaken numerous policy initiatives which have had an impact on national forestry policy in the countries where forestry is practiced. In 2021, the Commission published the Fit for 55 package, as an aim to boost the efforts to reach climate neutrality by 2050. This climate package sets an emission reduction target for 2030 as its interim target to at least 55 per cent. Fit for 55 has caused concern among forestry operators within the regions and between the EU Member States that practice forestry, as the initiatives solely concentrate on conservation and biodiversity perspectives and have not adequately considered the social and economic impact of forestry.

However, forests and forest use have a significant impact, especially in sparsely populated regions where forests and forestry are key sources of livelihood. Making forestry more difficult affects already vulnerable communities, which face significant difficulty finding other sources of income.

The European Network of Forested Regions views in brief:

- The European Network of Forested Regions emphasises the economic and social importance of forests. Besides environmental aspects, also the balance between economic and social needs should be acknowledged in the climate and biodiversity objectives set by the Commission. For the moment, these objectives focus only on forest restoration, conservation, and afforestation.
- The European Network of Forested Regions points out that many of the EU's forest-related initiatives are not speaking well between each other and stresses the need to improve the interconnectedness and decrease controversy between them.
- The European Network of Forested Regions stresses the importance to take regional dimensions and differences better into account while setting up EU-wide policies related to forests, as well as to utilise the knowledge, innovations, and expertise about forests from the regions in these decision-making processes.
- The European Network of Forested Regions further points out the need to consider the special conditions of the European average small scale forest owners. Increased administrative and surveillance requirements would have a disproportionately negative impact on the average European forest owner compared to large forest owning enterprises.

Regions' positioning on the EU's forestry-related initiatives

Promoted by European Regions for Innovation in Agriculture,
Food and Forestry - European Network of Forested Regions
29 March 2022



- The European Network of Forested Regions welcomes the Commission's action to increasingly promote the use of wood as a renewable and sustainably managed material, the production of wood-based and other forest raw materials as replacements for fossil raw materials and highlight the positive contribution of bioenergy to sustainable forest management.
- The European Network of Forested Regions highlights the importance of measures that support innovation and knowledge sharing as a mean to facilitate the coexistence of environmental, economic, and social functions of our forests and relevant forest-based economies and value-chains.

On behalf of:

Regional Government of Aragón, Spain

Region of Basque Country, Spain

The state of Bavaria, Germany

Region of Campania, Italy

Region of Castilla y Leon, Spain

Region of Catalonia, Spain

Region of Central-Ostrobothnia, Finland

Region of the Centre-Val de Loire, France

Regional Council of Central Finland

Counties of North Sweden

Kainuu Region, Finland

Region Kalmar, Sweden

Region Kronoberg, Sweden

The regional council of Lapland, Finland

Region of North Karelia, Finland

North Savo, Finland

Region of Ostrobothnia, Finland

Oulu Region, Finland

Regional Council of Satakunta, Finland

Region of South Karelia, Finland

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Region of Thüringen, Germany

Province of South Tyrol, Italy

Tuscany Region, Italy

Region of Western Macedonia, Greece

Region Östergötlands, Sweden