


## REVIEW PAPER

# Development of European Union policy on forests and forestry before the European Green Deal

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## ABSTRACT

This article presents and analyses the evolution of the European Union's forest policy prior to the adoption of the European Green Deal in 2019. We provide an overview of the main EU policy initiatives and documents related to forests and forestry up to 2018, based on a content analysis of policy documents and legal acts as well as literature on the subject. In the following sections, we discuss EU initiatives up to 1998, including the Thomas Report (1986), the first Forestry Strategy for the European Union (1998) and the EU Forest Action Plan (2006), the new EU Forest Strategy (2013), and the review of progress in implementing the new EU Forestry Strategy (2018). Our review illustrates the evolution in terms of forest policy formulation by the European Union. Although the EU treaties did not provide a legal basis for EU regulation on forest-related issues, numerous initiatives have been undertaken since the 1960s, initially under the Common Agricultural Policy. Increasing problems with the natural environment, linked mainly to the massive destruction of tropical rainforests and forest fires in the Mediterranean forests, and growing public awareness prompted the EU institutions to take a series of activities in the 1980s and 1990s that broadened the range of forest-related initiatives. As a result, the first EU Forestry Strategy was adopted in the form of a Council Resolution in 1998. Since the early 1990s, Member States and the EU institutions have been taking joint action to develop a forest policy framework at the supranational level. Since the early 1990s, forest policy at European level has been supported to a large extent by the Forest Europe process where the European Union and all European countries are signatories), reflecting also global environmental agendas within the United Nations. Forest Europe and EU policies have influenced and complemented each other, and all of the above processes have been clearly reflected in EU policy objectives and actions.


## KEY WORDS

CAP, forest-focused policies, forest-related policies, forest strategy


## Introduction

The economic, social, and political changes of recent decades are reflected in the way the natural environment and forests are considered on policy agendas. Forest policy at various levels – from

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the international and supranational to the national and regional – is highly dependent on ongoing global processes (Paschalis-Jakubowicz, 2010; Adeyeye *et al.*, 2019; Park *et al.*, 2023). The changes in the natural environment caused mainly by climate change and the loss of biodiversity are a very important factor for socio-economic changes (Luhás *et al.*, 2021). Both phenomena are of great importance for forest ecosystems. On the one hand, forests play an important role in the uptake and storage of atmospheric carbon, limiting the greenhouse effect and mitigating climate change (Roe *et al.*, 2021; Moreau *et al.*, 2022). However, they are also exposed to climate change and extreme weather events and are threatened by the decline in biodiversity as a result of this change (Tilman *et al.*, 2014; Muys *et al.*, 2022).

The current forest policy discourse is being driven by the European Green Deal (EGD), which was adopted by the European Commission in 2019. It focuses on the above-mentioned threats and challenges related to climate change and biodiversity loss. The idea of EGD is to transform the European Union into a society living in a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy. The goals include achieving zero net greenhouse gas emissions in 2050, protecting, preserving and enhancing the EU's natural capital, and protecting the health and well-being of citizens from environmental threats and their negative impacts (European Commission, 2019). The general objectives of the EGD for forests have been concretized in related strategies, where two of them are directly focused on forests: the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 (European Commission, 2020) and the new EU Forest Strategy for 2030 (European Commission, 2021b).

However, the adoption of the EGD and its strategies was preceded by a long process of formulating the European Union's forest-related policy. Its origins date back to the 1960s, when the European Community adopted the first forestry measures under the Common Agricultural Policy. The EU's approach to forests and their integration into the different sectoral policies has changed over time. This paper aims to outline these changes, focusing on the measures taken before the adoption of the European Green Deal, *i.e.* from the 1960s to 2018, in order to illustrate the shift in forest policy in the EU before and after the EGD.

## Methods

The review of key European Union documents related to forests and forestry up to 2018 was based on a content analysis of policy documents and legal acts as well as literature on the topic (Weimer and Winning, 2010; van Thiel, 2014). The database of the European Union legal acts (EUR-Lex) was used for searching for forest-related documents and served as their source. Using the General content analysis the potential impact of the documents was identified (whether and how these documents affect forest and forestry). As a result, a total of 27 documents directly or indirectly related to forests (policies, legal acts, communications) issued by the main institutions of the European Community and later the European Union (Council, European Commission, European Parliament) were identified and considered for the further review. Five subsequent EC/EU treaties were also included in the study. We then focussed on the objectives and general guidelines for the forest sector set out in the documents and their role in EC/EU forest policy. Documents which formulate frameworks and objectives for forests and forest management in the EC/EU were defined and then considered as key documents. As a next step in-depth desk research of the key documents was conducted. Using qualitative content analysis we identified and analysed objectives and actions for forests in chronological order, which was the subject of our review. The study was complemented by a literature review on the achievements and objectives of EU forest policy during the period under review.

## Results

EUROPEAN UNION INITIATIVES UNTIL 1998. The European Union does not have a common forest policy (Pülzl *et al.*, 2013; Lazdinis *et al.*, 2019). The legal basis for a common forest policy was not contained in the Treaty of Rome establishing the European Economic Community, nor in subsequent treaties: Treaty on the European Union (Maastricht Treaty) (Treaty, 1992), Treaty of Amsterdam (Treaty, 1997), Treaty of Nice (Treaty, 2001) and Treaty of Lisbon (Treaty, 2007).

According to Articles 3a and 3b of the Lisbon Treaty, ‘competences not conferred upon the Union in the Treaties remain with the Member States’ and ‘under the principle of subsidiarity, in areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence, the Union shall act only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States (...)’ (Treaty, 2016). European Union action in the field of forestry is related to the implementation of objectives under policies that fall under the exclusive competence of the Union (*e.g.* common commercial policy) and under shared competence (including internal market, agriculture, environment, consumer protection, energy) (Articles 3 and 4 of the Lisbon Treaty). In cases where the above provisions do not provide a sufficient legal basis for the implementation of joint actions, Article 352(1) of the Treaty applies, which reads as follows: ‘If action by the Union should prove necessary, within the framework of the policies defined in the Treaties, to attain one of the objectives set out in the Treaties, and the Treaties have not provided the necessary powers, the Council, acting unanimously on a proposal from the Commission and after obtaining the consent of the European Parliament, shall adopt the appropriate measures (...)’ (Treaty, 2016).

The formulation and implementation of forest policy in the Union remains – due to the principle of subsidiarity – in principle the exclusive competence of the Member States. At the same time, at the EU level, forest-focused and forest-related issues are spread across different areas of EU activity (Pülzl *et al.*, 2013; Lazdinis *et al.*, 2019; Wolfslehner *et al.*, 2020). As a result, the forest sector is subject to EU-level action under policies that fall under exclusive or shared competence (agriculture, environment, energy and climate, and others). Insufficient coordination and coherence of actions within each policy area at the EU level and between the Member States and the EU institutions is also a major problem, fostering the pursuit of potentially conflicting objectives and leading to conflict situations (Pülzl *et al.*, 2013; Winkel and Sotirov, 2016).

Despite the lack of a treaty basis for implementing common forestry measures, the Community has taken measures indirectly related to forestry since the 1960s. They were initially carried out under the Common Agricultural Policy and focused mainly on the development of forest plantations and the improvement and distribution of forest genetic material. These were very one-sided measures that considered only the commercial aspect of forest management, what some have called ‘shadow forest policy’, that is a forest policy developed in the shadow of the CAP (Pettenella, 1993). In 1978, under pressure from the European Parliament, the European Commission presented a document on Community’s policy on forests. The document was rejected by the Council of Ministers of the European Community, although it was supported by the Parliament. In 1986, the Commission made another attempt, but the document was rejected by the European Parliament, which criticised the project for ignoring the potential development of the Community’s forest resources in a situation of negative trade balance for wood products (the Community was then the largest importer of wood in the world) and for lacking a global vision. In addition, MEPs pointed out the need to formulate a Community strategy for the forestry sector, focusing on the creation of an integrated common forestry policy (Buckens, 1997).

In 1988, the European Commission presented a series of proposals for legal measures related to forests, which, after amendments, were finally approved by the European Parliament as a ‘forestry action programme’ and adopted by the Council in 1989. This programme, revised and strengthened in subsequent years, became the informal ‘common forestry policy’ of the Community and included the following areas (Buckens, 1997):

- developing the value of forests – Member States received funding from the Structural Funds for silvicultural measures on all types of land, including afforestation, improvement and optimal use of forest land, and development of forestry infrastructure and upstream operations for logging and storage (Council Regulation, 1988, 1989a, b, 1990);
- forest genetic resources; activities in this area were mainly concerned with the conservation, identification, harvesting and utilisation of genetic resources in agriculture and silviculture; the main objective of the regulations was to coordinate and promote the actions of Member States in this area (Council Directive, 1966, 1990; Council Regulation, 1994a);
- establishment of the European Forestry Information and Communication System (EFICS) with the aim of collecting comparable and objective information on forest resources, forest products, structural organization of forestry, Community activities and national forest policies (Council Regulation, 1989c, 1994b);
- protection of forests from atmospheric pollution (Council Regulation, 1986a, 1989d);
- protection of forests against fires (Council Regulation, 1986b, 1989e);
- research – to support research in forestry through projects within the Community Framework Programme for Research and Development that focus primarily on forest genetics, disease control, forest ecosystems, and multipurpose forestry;
- a regulation to promote afforestation and improvement of woodlands (Council Regulation, 1992);
- a decision establishing a Standing Forestry Committee in order to ensure closer and more constant cooperation between Member States and the Commission (Council Decision, 1989).

Since the late 1980s, there have been increasing tendencies to integrate the problems of environmental protection into economic development. One of the milestones of the international forum was the 1992 ‘Earth Summit’ in Rio de Janeiro, where a series of international political and legal documents were adopted to implement the idea of sustainable development at the global level (Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Convention on Biological Diversity, Forest Principles, Agenda 21) (Fiedor *et al.*, 2002). Of great importance in shaping future EU forest strategies were the agreements reached at the Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE, currently Forest Europe), in particular the commitment to sustainable forest management in Europe and its definition (Strasbourg, 1990; Helsinki, 1993). Referring to the UN and MCPFE agreements, the European Parliament, on the initiative of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, commissioned the preparation of a technical report on the European Union’s forestry strategy in 1994. The Member of Parliament, David E. Thomas, was responsible for the preparation of the report. In commissioning the report (Thomas Report), the European Parliament made use for the first time of Article 138b of the Maastricht Treaty, which gives it the power to take a legislative initiative (Buckens, 1997).

The Thomas Report (Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, 1996) did not provide a clear framework for action by the European Commission, but merely suggested that actions taken at the EU level should complement national forest policies. The proposed actions focused mainly on:

- preventing desertification and soil erosion and protect forests, especially in mountainous regions,
- protecting forests from fires,
- effective promotion of the European timber sector and the diverse use of wood,
- supporting the future integration of the forest resources of the Central and Eastern European accession countries,
- expanding the role of the Standing Forestry Committee so that it becomes the main instrument for coordinating forestry activities,
- supporting work on an international agreement on the protection and sustainable management of forests,
- creating an integrated strategy for forestry outside the European Union.

The report emphasises that given the importance of the forest sector as a source of employment and wealth, commercial use of forests in conjunction with other uses should be a priority in the EU forestry strategy. The strategy should be based on recognition of the diversity of European forests, their multifunctionality and the need for ecological, economic and social sustainability. It should also have a global and unitary in character, encourage solidarity within the forest sector, and respect the principle of subsidiarity, *i.e.* be subordinate to and complementary to national policies. The report's explanatory memorandum also states that the formulation of a common forestry policy has no chance of being approved by the Council, and that measures aimed at proper coordination of national and EU activities will be most effective (Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, 1996). It is worth noting that the report has been heavily criticized by environmental NGOs for focusing primarily on the commercial aspects of forest policy without considering the broader environmental aspects (Buckens, 1997).

The Thomas Report was adopted by the European Parliament in January 1997. At the same time, the Parliament adopted a resolution on a forestry strategy for the European Union (Resolution, 1997). In its resolution, the Parliament set out the principles and objectives of the future forestry strategy and the measures proposed therein, and gave the European Commission two years to prepare a legislative proposal in this regard.

In November 1998, the European Commission presented its position on the European Union Forestry Strategy (Communication, 1998). According to the Commission, the main objective of the EU forestry strategy is to support the sustainable development of forests and forest management in accordance with the principles adopted in international fora, including the MCPFE. It should be noted that in addition to the two conferences in Strasbourg and Helsinki mentioned above, the third conference in Lisbon in 1998 led to the adoption of pan-European criteria, indicators and operational guidelines for sustainable forest management, to which the strategy refers. These principles should be adopted and implemented through national and sub-national forest programmes or equivalent instruments and, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, through Community action. The forestry strategy to be developed should also, among other things, support the achievement of the objectives of other policies implemented by the Union, contribute to the fulfilment of the international obligations of the Member States and the European Union, respect the principle of free movement of goods and free competition and not distort competition in the EU market, increase the competitiveness of the forest-based sector of the European Union, and contribute to the increase of prosperity and employment in rural areas and industry. In its document, the Commission also discussed in detail the areas of action that should be included in the forestry strategy.

THE FIRST FORESTRY STRATEGY FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION (1998) AND THE EU FOREST ACTION PLAN (2006). In December 1998, the Council adopted a resolution on the European Union Forestry Strategy (Council Resolution, 1998). The Council adopted the general principles of the European Union forestry strategy formulated by the Commission, while pointing out the need to focus on specific issues related to the forest sector. The most important ones were:

- review by the Commission of the measures contained in the Council Regulation on the protection of the Community's forests against atmospheric pollution and propose solutions to improve the effectiveness of the European monitoring system of forest health and extend its scope;
- improve the Community forest fire protection programme;
- place particular emphasis on the further development and improvement of the European Forest Information and Communication System (EFICS) so that the data obtained from it are as reliable and credible as possible;
- present a report by the Commission on the possibilities for improving the coordination of policies related to the forestry sector at Community level and on the possibility of making more extensive use of the institutions dealing with forestry issues;
- the protection of areas representing all types of forest ecosystems and forest ecosystems of special ecological importance in the framework of the Natura 2000 ecological network.

The Council also made it a priority to improve the image of forestry and its products in the eyes of consumers and the public. Therefore, it recommended implementing the principles of sustainable forest management, promoting the forest certification system and the wider use of wood as a renewable and environmentally friendly material, and encouraging the use of wood as an energy source. The Commission was required to submit a report to the Council within five years evaluating the implementation of the forestry strategy.

In 2005, the Commission presented the report evaluating the implementation of the EU forestry strategy. The report highlighted the achievements of the Member States and the EU institutions so far in achieving the set objectives, but also contained many critical comments on them. The Commission saw opportunities for developing and implementing a specific action plan in the area of forestry. The Commission presented such a plan to the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament in mid-2006 in the form of a Communication on the EU Forest Action Plan (Communication, 2006).

The purpose of the plan was to provide a coherent framework for the implementation of forest-related measures in the Member States and to be a tool for coordination between Community measures and national forest policies. It adopted the main principles and elements of the EU forestry strategy adopted in 1998 and took into account the increasing importance of global and cross-sectoral issues in forest policy, which require better coherence and coordination of actions, as well as the need to strengthen the competitiveness of the forest sector and the proper management of forests throughout the European Union.

Actions under this plan focused on four main goals with a total of 18 core actions. The objectives were:

- improve long-term competitiveness and promote sustainable use of forest products and services,
- improve the state of the environment and its protection, including the conservation and enhancement of the biodiversity of forest ecosystems, support CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration by forests, improve the state of forests and their resilience to external factors,

- contribute to the quality of life by preserving and supporting the social and cultural dimension of forests,
- foster coordination and communication, including improving cohesion and cooperation between sectors in order to maintain a balance between economic, environmental and socio-cultural objectives at different organizational and institutional levels (Communication, 2006).

The EU Forest Action Plan expired in 2011. The ex-post evaluation found that while the plan's actions were largely put into practice, the voluntary instrument itself was not very effective in terms of coordinating actions. This was due to the fact that there were no separate funds and instruments for the implementation of the plan and the actual implementation was 'incidental' to other activities. The Action Plan contributed significantly to improving communication on forestry between Member States and the European Commission, but did not improve the coherence of actions implemented under the various forest-related EU policies (EFI, 2012).

The ex-post evaluation of the EU Forest Action Plan highlighted the need for a new forest strategy that establishes and implements a common vision for multifunctional and sustainable forest management in Europe, sets priorities for action and targets, links EU and Member State funding strategies and plans, and strengthens coherent planning, financing, and implementation of cross-sectoral activities.

THE NEW EU FOREST STRATEGY (2013). In response to the recommendation formulated in the ex-post evaluation of the EU Forest Action Plan, the European Commission published a new EU forest strategy for forests and the forest-based sector in 2013 (Communication, 2013). The strategy was intended to be the main reference point for the development of forest policy and help the EU forestry sector to contribute effectively to the objectives of the European Union. The strategy was based on three guiding principles, drawing on existing legislation and international initiatives, including work carried out under Forest Europe (formerly MCPFE):

- sustainable forest management and the multifunctional role of forests, providing multiple goods and services in a balanced way and ensuring forest protection,
- resource efficiency, optimizing the contribution of forests and the forest sector to rural development, growth and job creation,
- global responsibility for forests, promoting sustainable production and consumption of forest products.

The strategy also set a key objective for forests in the 2020 perspective, namely to ensure and demonstrate that all forests in the EU are managed in accordance with sustainable forest management principles and to strengthen the EU's contribution to promoting sustainable forest management and reducing deforestation at the global level. The document identifies eight priority areas for strategic action by Member States and the European Commission:

- protect rural and urban populations, including through better and wider use of rural development funds to promote sustainable forest management;
- promote the competitiveness and sustainability of forestry, bioenergy and the green economy in the EU;
- improve the climate change mitigation potential of forests through enhanced carbon sequestration and mitigation, and increase the capacity of forests to adapt to and improve their resilience to these changes;

- protect forests and improve ecosystem services, including by significantly and measurably improving the conservation status of forest species and habitats through the full implementation of EU nature legislation and the establishment of a framework for ecosystem services valuation;
- establish an information system on European forests;
- increase the contribution of the forest sector to the rural economy through sustainable forest management and the promotion of innovation;
- ensure better coordination of sustainable forest management, harmonization of information on forests and cooperation with and between Member States, including by strengthening the Standing Forestry Committee;
- promote sustainable forest management in Europe and worldwide; assist developing countries in this regard (Communication, 2013).

In 2018, the European Commission undertook a review of progress in implementing the new EU forest strategy (European Commission, 2018). In line with the Multi-annual Implementation Plan (Forest MAP) adopted by the Commission and the Standing Forestry Committee, the review was intended to support priority setting for 2018-2020. The document summarizes progress made in all eight priority areas of the strategy. Particular attention was paid to the role of rural development policy and to issues related to the implementation of measures in the Natura 2000 network. In the area of the green economy and industry, activities focused on promoting the sustainable acquisition and use of forest biomass, innovative bioproducts, the amendment of the Renewable Energy Directive, and issues related to access to foreign markets. In the context of climate change, the report emphasized the importance of the LULUCF regulation and the adaptation strategy. The need for further action to protect forests was highlighted, including strengthening the role of forest management plans. In the area of forest information, activities focused on work on the Forest Information System for Europe (FISE), which will integrate data from existing resources. The sustainable development of the forest sector was strengthened through the implementation of research and innovation programs, and it was recommended to improve the dissemination of results. The Standing Forestry Committee played a key role as it remained the focal point for the implementation of the forestry strategy. The SFC operated on the basis of annual work programs that were based on and consistent with the Multi-annual Implementation Plan. Activities carried out under the global perspective area aimed to strengthen the EU's role on the global stage in promoting sustainable forest management and reducing deforestation, and to promote the role of forests in sustainable development. The review of the EU Timber Regulation confirmed that FLEGT is an appropriate instrument and pointed to the need to continue using it.

The conclusions of the Commission's review indicate that continued implementation of the forestry strategy would serve to develop the bioeconomy, protect biodiversity, and provide ecosystem services. The implementation of the strategy should contribute to economic growth, employment in rural and urban areas, and maintaining the competitiveness of the forestry and wood processing industries. The results of the review conducted by the Commission were presented to the Council, and in 2019 the Council prepared its conclusions (Council of the European Union, 2019). However, significant political changes took place in the same year, leading to the adoption of the European Green Deal and the expansion of the European Union's activities in the field of forests and forestry. Table 1 shows the main turning points that influenced EU forest policy before the European Green Deal.



Table 1.

The main turning points that influenced EU forest policy before the European Green Deal

Year	Action	Outcomes
1960s and 1970s	Various activities within the European Economic Community	Attempts to create a policy that establishes common rules for the management of forest resources (within the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy)
1989	Informal 'Forestry action programme'	A series of legal measures, including the decision to establish a Standing Forestry Committee
1992	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro	Convention on Biological Diversity, UN Convention on Climate Change, Forest Principles, Agenda 21
1993	Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe in Helsinki	Resolution H1 – General Guidelines for the Sustainable Management of Forests in Europe
1997	The Thomas Report; European Parliament resolution on a forestry strategy for the European Union	Setting out the principles and objectives of the future forestry strategy; calling on the European Commission to draw up a legislative proposal in this regard
1998	Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe in Lisbon	Resolution L2 – Pan-European Criteria, Indicators and Operational Level Guidelines for Sustainable Forest Management
1998	Position of the European Commission on the European Union Forestry Strategy; Council Resolution on the forestry strategy for the European Union	Adoption of the first forestry strategy for the European Union
2005	Commission report evaluating the implementation of the EU forestry strategy	Recommendation for the development and implementation of a specific action plan in the field of forestry
2006	EU Forest Action Plan	Establishing targets and core actions by 2011, improving coherence and coordination of actions with the aim of strengthening the competitiveness of the forest sector.
2012	Ex-post evaluation of the EU Forest Action Plan	Highlighting the need for a new forest strategy with a shared vision for sustainable forest management in Europe, setting priorities for action and targets, and strengthening coherence and coordination
2013	New EU forest strategy for forests and the forest-based sector	Ensuring and demonstrating that all forests in the EU are managed according to the principles of SFM by 2020, identifying priority areas for strategic action by Member States and the EU
2015	UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	Sustainable Development Goals; Goal 15 – Life on Land: Protection of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainable forest management
2015	Paris Agreement	The agreement includes the conservation and enhancement of forests as sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases
2017	UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030	6 voluntary and universal global forest goals and 26 associated targets to be achieved by 2030
2018	Review of progress in implementing the new EU forest strategy	Recommendations include the continued implementation of the forestry strategy
2019	European Green Deal	

## Discussion

The foregoing overview of forest-based and forest-related initiatives taken by the European Union illustrates the evolution of the Union's approach to this issue. Neither the Treaty of Rome nor subsequent treaties contain references to forests and provide no legal basis for EU regulation intended directly to forests. However, due to the close relationship between forestry and agriculture and rural areas, the first regulations indirectly affecting forests were adopted in the 1960s. On the other hand, increasing problems with the natural environment and growing public awareness prompted EU institutions, including the European Parliament, to undertake a series of activities in the 1980s and 1990s that broadened the range of forest-related initiatives. As a result, the first EU Forestry Strategy was adopted in the form of a Council Resolution in 1998.

The adopted strategy stems directly from the Thomas Report and the 1997 European Parliament resolution. The driving forces behind the adoption of the EU forest policy framework were growing concerns about the coherence between Member States' forest policies and the EU's forest-related activities in relation to national and international forest policies. And although the EU Forestry Strategy, supported by a Council resolution, helped to provide a framework for action, the proposed measures seemed insufficient in terms of coherence, and coordination of forest policy decisions remained poor. The Standing Forestry Committee, established in 1989 as a coordinating body for policy implementation, has not been able to exert sufficient influence on policy coordination and coherence. Nevertheless, the Standing Forestry Committee should be seen as an important milestone for the involvement of Member States in the development of forest policy. The Committee's role was to exchange information to enable 'coordination' among Member States, consult with the European Commission, and generally discuss all forest-related policies and initiatives of the European Economic Community (Hogl, 2007).

To improve policy coherence and cross-sectoral cooperation in the forest sector, the Forest Action Plan (Pülzl and Hogl, 2013) was implemented in 2005, the main starting point of which was the strengthening of the Standing Forestry Committee (SFC). However, attempts at coordination over the years have remained largely at the level of voluntary cooperation among Member States, with some coordination activities carried out by and within the Commission. The evaluation of the Action Plan has shown that a coherent approach to sustainable forest management that addresses environmental as well as social and economic concerns is still lacking (Lazdinis *et al.*, 2019).

The EU forest strategy for forests and the forest-based sector (2013) also aimed to coordinate and make coherent forest-related policies and allows synergies with other sectors that influence forest management. As stated by Aggestam and Pülzl (2018) the strategy did not address many EU policies and policy instruments, especially those with significant costs (for example, legislation related to energy production and use, industrial emissions, air quality, waste management, environmental liability and phytosanitary requirements and tariffs), that affect the entire value chain, and without coordination of collective EU objectives and strong political support, it would be extremely difficult, if at all possible, to achieve a coherent EU forest policy for the entire value chain (Aggestam and Pülzl, 2018).

It must also be noted, that since the early 1990s, forest policy at the European level has been shaped primarily by the global agendas under United Nations (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Convention on Biological Diversity, UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030) and by the Forest Europe process and its commitments for forests and sustainable forest management,

involving the European Union and all European countries. These global and regional agreements provided the basis for the development of regulations and policies that directly or indirectly affect forests and forestry, at a broader than national level. Both processes at the European level (Forest Europe and EU policies) have influenced and complemented each other (Kleinschmit and Edwards, 2013; Kaliszewski, 2018), and all of the above processes have been clearly reflected in EU policy objectives and actions. This framework for the development of the sustainable forest management was shaping forest policy until 2019. The European Green Deal has become another important milestone in all EU policies, including those related to forests.

## Conclusions

Our research allows us to formulate the following conclusions:

- ✦ Although the European Union does not have an independent common forest policy, the EC and the Member States have been implementing actions and measures within the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy since 1960. Since the early 1990s, EU forest policy has been supported and developed in parallel with the actions of the EU and Member States under the Forest Europe process and the UN global agendas.
- ✦ The scope of forestry action has also expanded over time, leading to the adoption of the first European Union Forest Strategy in 1998, followed by the EU Forest Action Plan (2006) and the new EU Forest Strategy (2013).
- ✦ Over time, growing environmental awareness has led to an evolution in the approach of EU forest policy to forests and forest management. From a focus on forest plantations and genetic resources in the 1960s, to the productive potential of the forest sector in the 1980s, to sustainable development and the integration of environmental protection into forestry in the 1990s. Since then, sustainable forest management has become the most important framework for the forestry and timber sector.

## Authors' contributions

A.K. – conception, methodology, collection of materials, investigation, writing – preparation of original draft, manuscript review, editing; M.W-P. – conception, methodology, supplementary material collection, investigation, writing – preparation of the original draft, manuscript review, editing.

## Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no potential conflicts of interest.

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## STRESZCZENIE

### Rozwój polityki Unii Europejskiej w zakresie lasów i leśnictwa przed Europejskim Zielonym Ładem

Zmiany gospodarcze, społeczne i polityczne zachodzące w ostatnich dekadach mają odzwierciedlenie w podejściu do środowiska naturalnego i lasów. Polityka leśna na różnych poziomach decyzyjnych jest znacząco uzależniona od procesów o charakterze globalnym. Bardzo ważny czynnik przemian społeczno-gospodarczych stanowią zmiany w środowisku naturalnym, wywołane przede wszystkim zmianami klimatu i utratą różnorodności biologicznej. Na tych zagrożeniach i wyzwaniach koncentruje się przyjęty przez Komisję Europejską w 2019 r. Europejski Zielony Ład (EZŁ), będący nową strategią na rzecz wzrostu. Ideą EZŁ jest przekształcenie Unii Europejskiej w społeczeństwo żyjące w nowoczesnej, oszczędnej w odniesieniu do zasobów i konkurencyjnej gospodarce. Jego głównym celem jest osiągnięcie w 2050 r. zerowego poziomu emisji gazów cieplarnianych netto, a także ochrona, zachowanie i poprawa kapitału naturalnego UE oraz ochrona zdrowia i dobrostanu obywateli przed zagrożeniami i negatywnymi skutkami związanymi ze środowiskiem.

Ogólne cele wyznaczone w EZŁ zostały uszczegółowione w 2 strategiach bezpośrednio dotyczących lasów i gospodarki leśnej: Unijnej strategii na rzecz bioróżnorodności 2030 oraz Nowej strategii leśnej UE 2030. Celem pierwszej jest wsparcie naczelnego celu Konwencji o różnorodności biologicznej dotyczącego zapewnienia odbudowy, odporności i odpowiedniej ochrony wszystkich światowych ekosystemów do 2050 r., a także zapewnienie, aby do 2030 r. europejska różnorodność biologiczna weszła na ścieżkę regeneracji z korzyścią dla ludzi, planety, klimatu i naszej gospodarki, zgodnie z Agendą na rzecz zrównoważonego rozwoju 2030 oraz z celami porozumienia klimatycznego z Paryża. Nowa strategia leśna UE 2030 ma natomiast wspierać osiągnięcie przez UE do 2050 r. zrównoważonej i neutralnej dla klimatu gospodarki, przy jednoczesnym zapewnieniu odtwarzania, odporności i odpowiedniej ochrony wszystkich ekosystemów.

Obecne działania Unii Europejskiej w zakresie lasów i leśnictwa nie ograniczają się do kwestii zmian klimatu i zachowania różnorodności biologicznej. Od lat 60. XX stulecia, kiedy Wspólnota podejmowała pierwsze działania związane z leśnictwem w ramach Wspólnej Polityki Rolnej, zaszła głęboka ewolucja w podejściu Unii Europejskiej do lasów i uwzględniania ich w różnych politykach sektorowych. W niniejszym artykule omówiono działania związane z lasami podejmowane przez Unię Europejską od lat 60. XX stulecia do 2018 r. Inicjatywy podejmowane w ramach EZŁ stanowiąc będą natomiast przedmiot odrębnego artykułu.

Przedstawiony w niniejszym artykule przegląd najważniejszych działań i dokumentów Unii Europejskiej w zakresie lasów i leśnictwa do 2018 r. opiera się na analizie dokumentów politycznych i aktów prawnych, a także literatury przedmiotu. Tok postępowania obejmował identyfikację dokumentów (strategie, akty prawne) przyjmowanych przez Wspólnotę Europejską, a następnie przez UE, bezpośrednio lub pośrednio związanych z lasami. Źródłem dokumentów była baza aktów prawnych Unii Europejskiej (EUR-Lex).

W pracy omówiono kolejno inicjatywy UE w zakresie polityki leśnej do 1998 r., w tym Raport Thomasa (1986), pierwszą strategię leśną Unii Europejskiej (1998) oraz Plan działań UE w zakresie gospodarki leśnej (2006), nową strategię leśną UE (2013) oraz przegląd postępów we wdrażaniu nowej strategii leśnej UE (2018 r.). Zestawienie najważniejszych punktów zwrotnych w formułowaniu polityki zamieszczono w tabeli 1. Mimo że traktaty UE nie stanowią podstawy prawnej dla unijnych regulacji w kwestiach leśnych, od lat 60. XX w. podejmowano liczne inicjatywy dotyczące lasów. Początkowo wprowadzano je wyłącznie w ramach Wspólnej Polityki Rolnej. Narastające problemy środowiska naturalnego i rosnąca świadomość społeczna skłoniły instytucje UE do podjęcia w latach 80. i 90. XX w. szeregu działań poszerzających zakres inicjatyw związanych z leśnictwem. W rezultacie w 1998 r. przyjęto pierwszą strategię leśną UE w formie uchwały Rady Europejskiej. Choć nie istnieje formalna polityka leśna, państwa członkowskie i instytucje UE rozwijają taką politykę na poziomie ponadnarodowym. Od początku lat 90. XX w. polityka leśna na poziomie europejskim kształtowana jest przede wszystkim w obrębie globalnych agend w ramach Organizacji Narodów Zjednoczonych oraz w procesie Forest Europe (obejmującym Unię Europejską i wszystkie kraje europejskie). Polityka Forest Europe i polityka UE wpływały na siebie i uzupełniały się, a wszystkie powyższe procesy znalazły wyrazne odzwierciedlenie w celach i działaniach polityki UE.