

CEPF Feedback on the European Commission Inception Impact Assessment EU Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change

The Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF) welcomes the EC initiative to propose a new and more ambitious EU Adaptation Strategy as part of the European Green Deal and in support to the objectives of the EU Climate Law.

Under on-going changing climatic conditions, forests suffer from extreme weathers. It is projected that the occurrence and scale of natural disturbances, biotic or abiotic, will further increase, and it is thus essential to organise the paths towards stimulating forest health and resilience. Climate change already influences the life and work of forest owners in Europe, who report significantly increased pressures on forest ecosystems. Building up the resilience of European forests to climate change is a key feature of the policy considerations on climate change adaptation, as reflected in the Blueprint. In this view, we see the consideration of including in the Strategy actions that would provide more support to the resilience of forests and other ecosystems as a step in the right direction.

Increased resilience of EU forests through their adaptation to climate change must be suitable to local conditions and consider all available tools (e.g. biological diversity and genetic resilience, risk management and prevention, restoration of forests degraded by natural disasters, or forest management plans).

The future Adaptation Strategy should promote a flexible and dynamic approach of resilience. The long-term nature of forestry implies that selection of tree species should be forward-looking: they must remain adapted to site and climatic conditions foreseen by climate modelling. To meet a holistic approach of multifunctional forestry, species should also continue to produce the products and services for which they are valued.

CEPF believes that the EU Adaptation Strategy should be greatly oriented towards improving the knowledge of the scope and scale of climate change impacts on European forests, as well as to increase knowledge on ways to tackle, to prevent and to better adapt forests to these changes. Better access to knowledge with up-to-date scientific research, operational and user-friendly tools, and long-term data series, taking into consideration existing best examples of forest monitoring at regional level as well as improved outreach, trainings and exchange of good practices will be needed to secure active involvement and participation of forest owners.

In addition, European forests today carry a great climate mitigation potential that provides major climate benefits. Management of EU forests in a sustainable and active way contributes to enhanced absorption of CO₂ from the atmosphere and at the same time provide renewable and climate-friendly raw material which store carbon and can substitute fossil-based materials and fuels. Thus, it will be important to create synergies between climate change mitigation, adaptation needs and the EU climate neutrality goal.



Reaching the objectives of the Strategy will require concrete and appropriate funding sources and opportunities provided in an unbureaucratic way. Other financial instruments to manage exposure to risk in forests should be explored and assessed, such as more concrete opportunities and utilization of forest insurances in the EU, including of greater areas, so to decrease exposure to risk in risk prone areas.

Finally, CEPF supports further and reinforced mainstreaming of adaptation considerations in EU policies and instruments. Adaptation is key to maintain our forest, thus, opportunities should not be prevented by limitations on forest management. CEPF also sees the need to establish a firm reference in the Strategy with the new EU Forest Strategy, which should act as the main policy framework for forest issues.

CEPF believes the above-mentioned issues should be considered when developing action and policies required for EU adaptation to climate change and is looking forward to contributing to the next steps of the process.