



Guidelines on

Defining, Mapping Monitoring and Strictly Protecting EU Primary & Old-Growth Forests

The Policy Context

EU Biodiversity & EU Forest Strategies for 2030:

“All the EU’s remaining primary and old-growth forests should be strictly protected”

“To increase the quantity of forests and improve their health and resilience, biodiversity-friendly afforestation and reforestation and closer-to-nature-forestry practices should be promoted“

To support this, the Commission will develop in close collaboration with Member States and stakeholders guidelines on:

- closer-to-nature-forestry practices*
- biodiversity-friendly afforestation, reforestation and tree planting*
- on the definition of primary and old-growth forests, including their definition, mapping, monitoring and strict protection*





Guideline Development:

A collaborative approach

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

Definition & Identification

Primary forest: *'Naturally regenerated forest of native tree species, where there are no clearly visible indications of human activities, and the ecological processes are not significantly disturbed'*

~FAO Forest Resource Assessment

Old-growth forest: *'A forest stand or area consisting of native tree species that have developed, predominantly through natural processes, structures and dynamics normally associated with late-seral developmental phases in primary or undisturbed forests of the same type. Signs of former human activities may be visible, but they are gradually disappearing or too limited to significantly disturb natural processes.'*

Mapping

- At national level
- Based on definition and identification criteria of these guidelines

Main indicators: Native species, Deadwood, Old or Large Trees

Complementary indicators: Stand Origin, Structural Complexity, Indicator species

- Available to the public in transparent manner

Monitoring

- crucial to assess the effectiveness and impact of
 - governance,
 - management measures,
 - human and natural disturbances.
- Should focus on most important attributes
- Coordinated or integrated with NFIs, Habitats Directive, FISE...

Timetable for implementation

Step	Latest date
Member States to submit their pledges to the Commission on protected areas (under NADEG), including on strict protection. In line with the precautionary principle, Member States should without delay strictly protect those forest areas for which there is a strong probability , on the basis of the currently available information, that they meet definitions and criteria set out in this document.	Beginning 2023
Develop an identification and mapping methodology .	End 2023
Finalise the mapping of public primary and old-growth forests.	Mid 2025
Finalise the mapping of private primary and old-growth forests.	End 2025
Strictly protect identified and mapped primary and old-growth forests.	End 2029