The EU Closer-to-Nature Forest Management Guidelines
On Multifunctional forests and Payment for ecosystem services

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Supporting the EU Forest Strategy 2030

Milieu Consulting is based in Brussels and provides expert legal and policy support to EU institutions, delivering legal and policy studies on biodiversity, climate, environment, consumers and citizens' rights, inter alia.

We are implementing several projects in support of DG ENV, including: *Supporting implementation of the EU Forest Strategy 2030*

- This project aims to help the Commission achieve the ambitious goals set out in the EU Forest Strategy 2030

- Our role involves providing expertise and assistance across a wide range of key tasks to facilitate the strategy's successful implementation

- The project consists of a wide range of activities aimed at **strengthening biodiversity friendly forest management** across the EU

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Our Work in Action: Key Deliverables

Over this project's 3-year duration, the following key deliverables have been completed or are ongoing:

- **Task A:** SFM criteria and indicators used by EU Member States

- **Task B:** voluntary forest certification schemes for implementing the EU Closer-to-Nature Forest Management Guidelines

- **Task C2:** Analysis of **clear-cutting value chains** and proposal of alternative forest management practices *(details on next slide)*

- **Task G:** Examination of **Payment Schemes for Forest Ecosystem Services** *(details on next slide)*

- **Task H:** Organisation of workshops, seminars, and conferences to disseminate findings and engage forest stakeholders

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In Focus: Tasks C2 and G

Task C2: Value Chains and Alternatives to Clear-Cutting

- **Objective:** To analyse and evaluate value chains linked to clear-cutting, and to identify alternative forest management practices aligned with the Forest Strategy
  *This will be discussed further by **Jernej Stritih,** Founder and Director of Stritih (Slovenia) in Session 8 (Day 3, 22 May)*

Task G: Examination of Payment Schemes for Forest Ecosystem Services

- **Objective:** To provide the Commission with information on the application and impact of PES in Member States, focusing on how these schemes drive forest protection, restoration, and more climate and biodiversity-friendly practices

- **Key findings:** Over 15 different case studies of PES schemes, challenges identified include: insufficient financial support and sustainability, as well as inconsistent policy and legal frameworks that vary across Member States.

Many of these insights gained from our project work underpin the principles and practical application of the:
EU Guidelines on Closer-to-Nature Forest Management

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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

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The Three EU Forest Strategy Guidelines

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

➢ **Objective:** facilitate the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy goal of strictly protecting all the remaining primary and old-growth forests in the EU.

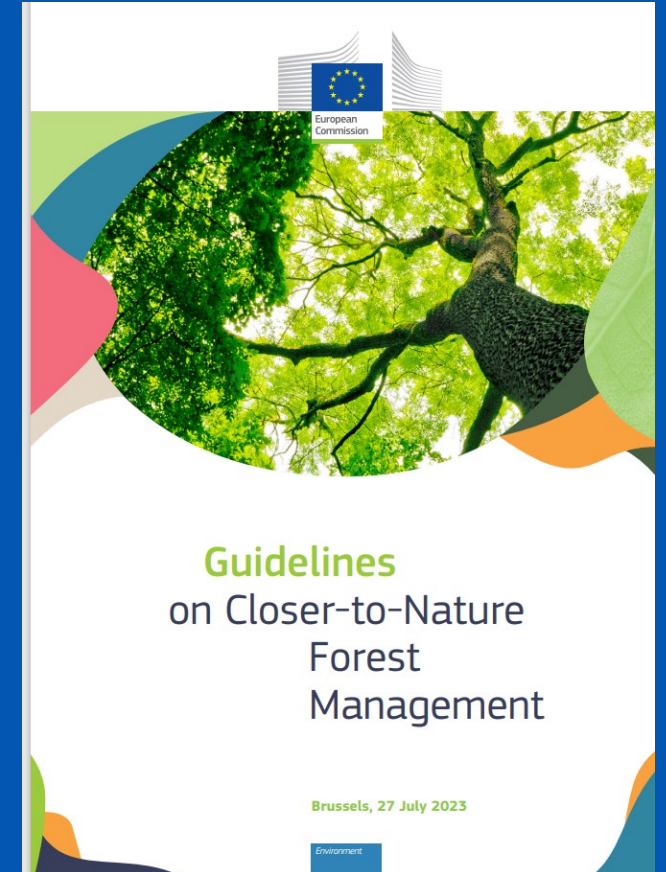**Guidelines on *Guidelines on Biodiversity-Friendly Afforestation, Reforestation and Tree Planting***

➢ **Objective:** promote tree planting initiatives, both afforestation and reforestation, that enhance biodiversity across the different landscapes of the EU.

Guidelines on *Closer-to-Nature Forest Management*

➢ **Objective:** foster forest management practices that are biodiversity-friendly, adaptive, and support multifunctionality and climate resilience, while strengthening socio-economic benefits.
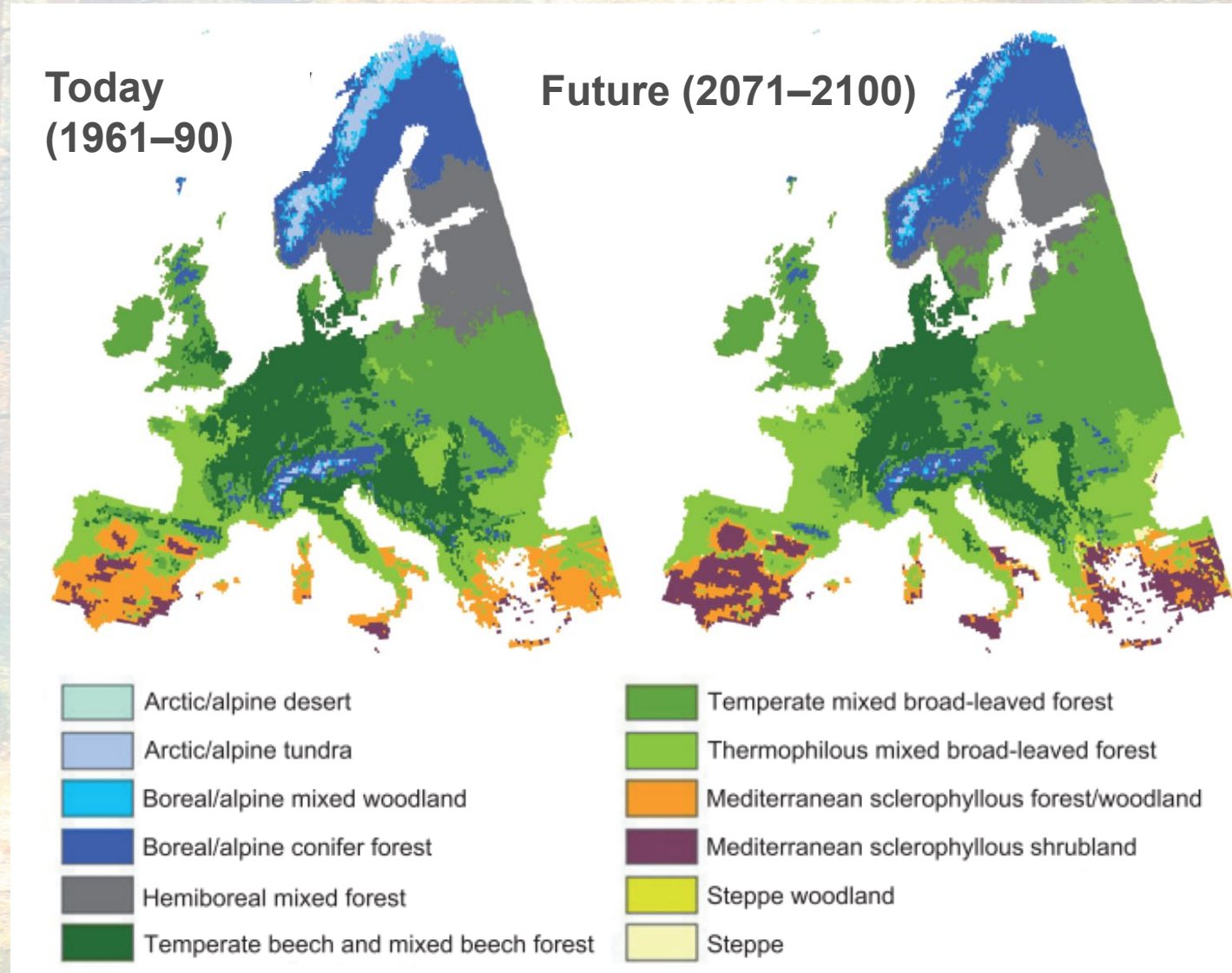
European Commission

Guidelines on Closer to Nature Forest Management

Guidelines
on Closer-to-Nature
Forest
Management

Brussels, 27 July 2023

Environment

Why Closer to Nature Forestry?

EU Forests today are not the resilient multifunctional ecosystems we want and need !

👍 Improvements in forest area, biomass volume and productivity

👎 One out of four trees shows moderate to severe defoliation and increasing

👎 Tree canopy mortality rate doubled since late 20th century (= 1% of the EU-27 forest area dying yearly)

👎 Biodiversity slight decline
(14% Good conservation status in N2K)

👎 Climate change impacts (e.g. disturbances, ecosystem shifts are increasing)

Today (1961–90)   **Future (2071–2100)**

Legend:
- Arctic/alpine desert
- Arctic/alpine tundra
- Boreal/alpine mixed woodland
- Boreal/alpine conifer forest
- Hemiboreal mixed forest
- Temperate beech and mixed beech forest
- Temperate mixed broad-leaved forest
- Thermophilous mixed broad-leaved forest
- Mediterranean sclerophyllous forest/woodland
- Mediterranean sclerophyllous shrubland
- Steppe woodland
- Steppe

Why Closer to Nature Forestry?

Biodiversity cannot easily be substituted

➢ Support for other key services like regulation of climate and nutrient cycles

➢ Key to Resilience: Forests with varied tree species and functional traits (e.g drought or heat stress tolerance) are better equipped to withstand and recover from disturbances like storms and pests and are less likely to experience large-scale die-offs.

➢ Boosting Productivity: Higher tree diversity can increase forest productivity, making it a strategic asset for wood producing forests

* RESONATE Policy brief on the role of biodiversity in making forests resilient (in prep.)

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Closer to Nature (CNF) means…..

➢ **biodiversity-friendly and adaptive forest management** for forest multifunctionality and climate change resilience without neglecting socio-economic benefits.

The CNF guidelines will…

➢ *assist competent authorities and key stakeholders* across different scales in taking up CNF principles and measures, discussing challenges and opportunities.

The CNF guidelines are…

➢ developed **for forests that have a commercial use for timber and non-timber forest products** not explicitly designated as protected areas

Framing CNF: Basic Principles

Closer-to-nature forest management (CNF):

"considers forests as ecosystems composed of a variety of organisms and abiotic elements above and below ground, all working together to constitute and maintain forest multifunctionality"

➢ based on ecosystem dynamics

➢ permits ecosystem dynamics and functioning

➢ integrates technical, economical, and social considerations

➢ integrates forest functions at different spatial scales

➢ uses a variety of silvicultural systems based on natural disturbance patterns of the region

➢ harvests timber with low-impact paying equal attention to what is retained in the forest as to what is removed

*Building on: Larsen, J.B.et al. 2022. Closer-to Nature Forest Management. From Science to Policy 12. EFI

CNF: Main objectives

Enhance structural complexity

Closer-to-nature forest management strives to create forests that are more:

➢ Heterogeneous and diverse in height, diameter, age and species

➢ Mixed with denser and sparser parts

…according to their natural mix of species and structures, forest type and phase of development

Promote natural forest dynamics

Closer-to-nature forest management relies as much as possible on natural dynamics with:

…light interventions to orientate natural dynamics in line with objectives and the natural range and distribution of existing and potential species of the considered site

➢ reduced investment costs (e.g. planting in the long-term)

Closer to Nature Forest Management Toolbox

- **Use natural tree regeneration**

- Ensure respectful harvest conditions

- Minimize management interventions

- Protect forest soil and water

- **Optimize deadwood**

- Set areas aside

- Take a scale-specific approach

- Manage ungulate species

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Enabling the Transition

- Training and Skills
- Economic Viability
- Mapping and Monitoring

Planning the Transition

Adaptive Management and Resilience
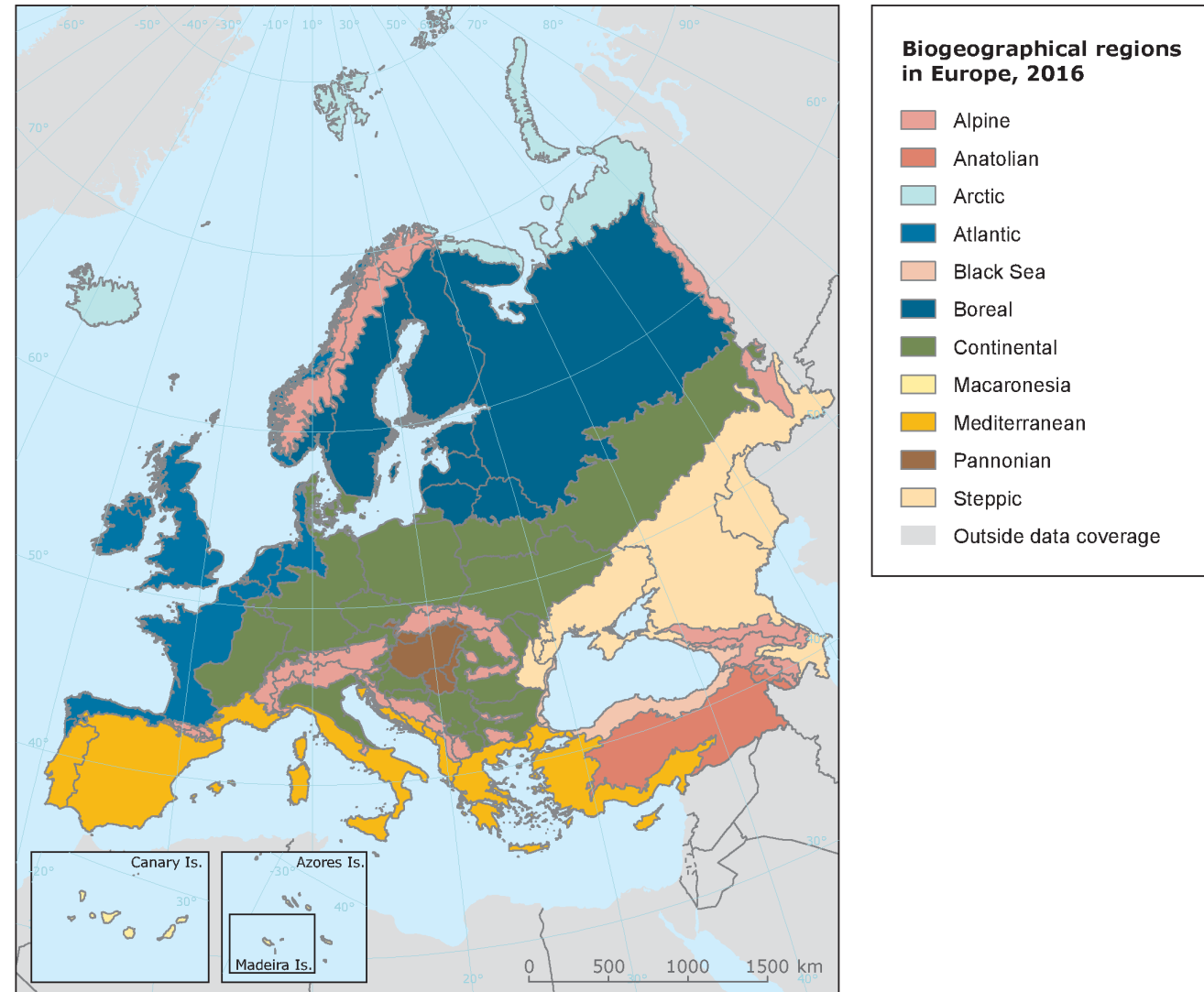
Taking account of Forest Fires

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Closer to Nature in different Regions

- Translate common objectives and principles into region-specific forestry reality

- Different region- different approach:

  - Case Studies

  - Parts of a Region

  - Region as a whole

Biogeographical regions in Europe, 2016
- Alpine
- Anatolian
- Arctic
- Atlantic
- Black Sea
- Boreal
- Continental
- Macaronesia
- Mediterranean
- Pannonian
- Steppic
- Outside data coverage

Thank you for your attention

environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/forests_en