

1st TG meeting on Supporting the Needs of Forest-Dominant Rural Areas and Municipalities

Laying the Groundwork for a Network under the Forest Strategy

16 March 2023

The EU [Forest Strategy](#) for 2030 (EUFS) outlines forests' economic importance in providing the raw materials for wood-based products, income for local businesses, jobs for rural populations, etc. Additionally, forests serve critical environmental functions for biodiversity and wildlife habitats, climate mitigation and adaptation through carbon sequestration as well as flood management and soil erosion prevention, and air and water nutrient cycling for combatting pollution. They also offer other social benefits as places rich with cultural heritage, providing opportunities for recreation and connecting with nature for physical and mental health benefits and traditional non-wood products that local communities use and depend on.

Those who own and manage forests will play a key role in achieving the EU-wide goals laid down in the European Green Deal, the European Climate Law, the Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and the proposed Nature Restoration Regulation. To thrive economically and socially, as well as deliver against these overarching commitments, local communities and areas where forests are dominant need to be enabled and empowered to do so.

Thus, one of the EUFS commitments is to develop *'a network of forest-dominant rural areas and municipalities...to give voice to forest rural areas, ensuring their representation in key initiatives...and facilitating specific assessments of reality and needs of forest areas across the EU'*. The Thematic Group is aimed at bringing actors together to explore the potential shape and scope of the proposed network.

Aims of the meeting:

- Take stock and explore the socio-economic and environmental needs and issues facing forest-dominant rural areas and municipalities;
- Share experiences between actors to identify challenges and barriers to addressing their needs / issues;
- Explore existing structures for involving forest-dominant areas in policy processes and what the added benefit of a network to support key stakeholders might be.

Draft agenda

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Timing	Agenda item
8.30	Registration – virtual meeting room opens
9.00 – 9.30	Opening – Welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose and objectives of the TG & Agenda – EU CAP Network • Getting to know one another / Icebreaker
9.30 – 10.30	Socio-economic and environmental needs and issues facing forest-dominant rural areas and municipalities. Presentations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anton Burkhart, <i>Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF), Belgium/Germany</i> • Marta Corella Gaspar, <i>Orea Town Council & esMontañas: Spanish Association of Mountain Municipalities, Spain</i> • Ivan Ambros, <i>Competence Centre Ltd. for research and development, Croatia</i>
10.30 – 10.45	<i>Coffee Break</i>
10.45 – 12.15	Rationale for the proposed network under the EU Forest Strategy – DG AGRI Enhancing the voice of forest-dominant areas through networking. Presentations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leena Leskinen, <i>Suomen metsäkeskus (Finnish Forest Centre), Finland</i> • Roderich Freiherr von Loë, <i>German Forestry Council & Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Private Forest Owners Association, Germany</i> Group discussions
12.15 – 12.50	Reporting back by keynote listeners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gerry Lawson, <i>European Agroforestry Federation, Spain</i> • Juha-Matti Markkola, <i>National Rural Network, Finland</i> • Elena Feo, <i>EUROMONTANA, Belgium</i>

	Brainstorm on future TG activities
12.50 – 13.00	Concluding Remarks and Next Steps.