

# *Thematic Group on Supporting the Needs of Forest-Dominant Rural Areas and Municipalities*

## **Collection of relevant practices**

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## Introduction

This document presents a collection of relevant practices shared by the members of the EU CAP Network's [Thematic Group on Supporting the Needs of Forest-Dominant Rural Areas and Municipalities](#).

This Thematic Group (TG) had two main aims. First, it provided an opportunity to explore the socio-economic and environmental needs and issues facing forest-dominant rural areas and municipalities, as well as highlighting the various opportunities that forests bring to the people who live and work in forests. The TG explored whether and how these issues could be addressed within the context of a new network and laid the groundwork for the potential development of further networking by identifying which stakeholders should be involved and how to strengthen networking in the context of the EU Forest Strategy to tackle these issues. Second, it aimed to identify what the CAP can do to support the needs of people living in forest-dominant rural areas and municipalities and enhance forest-related opportunities and benefits. [The Thematic Group](#) met twice and was composed of 40 members involved with forestry related activities in forest-dominant rural areas and municipalities, representing research, advisory services, civil society organisations, regional or local authorities, managing authorities, and national networks.

The Thematic Group also formulated policy recommendations for relevant stakeholders. These reflect the members' practical experience and the lessons learnt during the Thematic Group. These are summarised below and were presented to the Forest Standing Committee on 6 June 2023 by DG AGRI representatives.

1. There is a whole range of needs facing forest-dominant areas many of which are not forest specific but common to many rural areas (e.g., social issues relating to depopulation and services, limited employment opportunities, lack of skills, supply chain challenges). However, some issues are specific to these areas. In particular, the following challenge was highlighted: how to secure the multiple benefits / uses of forests – addressing the climate and environmental challenges, alongside the public demands for their recreational use, making them economically viable.
2. Concern was voiced about the potential forthcoming increase in environmental requirements on forests through proposed regulation (e.g., Nature Restoration Law). The key message from members was that there is sympathy with the proposals, but it would be helpful to involve forest stakeholders in the discussions in the development of the proposals.
3. Networking, working in partnership, and cooperation are key to resolving these needs and issues, which will vary depending on the area. There was agreement that networking is central to finding solutions for complex issues, which cannot be resolved through regulation alone. Many good practice examples were shared by TG members on initiatives that sought to balance the economic, social and environmental needs of forests and forest areas, and that sought to involve local stakeholders and networks. An easily accessible platform for sharing good practice

examples, and institutional networking among Member States were among some of the examples mentioned that could contribute to more effective exchanges among stakeholders.

4. The role of communication among different stakeholders (forest owners, their associations, local citizens, municipalities, relevant authorities, CAP Strategic Plan managing authorities, researchers, etc.) has been emphasised. Effective communication about regulations, relevant data (local, regional, national, and EU level), stakeholders' needs, stakeholders' experiences with initiatives, and the practical application of regulatory requirements in the field should work in both ways (bottom-up and top-down). It should be encouraged for developing effective institutional and regulatory mechanisms as well as funding support schemes to support the balanced use of forests.
5. Although the CAP includes a range of interventions that can be used to support the development of forest-dominant rural areas, there is confusion amongst stakeholders at the local / national level about what is available in their country in relation to forestry. A suggestion was made that an easily accessible synthesis of what was available could be provided by the relevant authorities. This could include both forest specific interventions and horizontal support, e.g., for advice, cooperation etc.
6. There needs to be a change in mindset about the ways of managing forest areas in the future so that they are productive, resilient to climate change as well as benefitting the environment and responding to the needs of local communities. These changes in mindset are needed within MS institutions as well as amongst those working on the ground. It is important that:
  - a. Institutions liaise with one another and do not work in silos,
  - b. ways are found to exchange knowledge and experiences between academics, advisers, and practitioners,
  - c. local initiatives involve all relevant stakeholders with a stake in what happens in the locality.
7. The vital role played by forest extension services to facilitate the changes required was flagged – however, in many places these were services that had been cut, which was hampering progress towards delivering targets in a joined-up way, e.g., for afforestation, or for developing new ways of managing the land, e.g., to manage fire risk.

The Thematic Group collected examples of relevant initiatives from its members and their networks. These practices are examples of working in partnership at all levels – ranging from the local through regional and national through the EU level, often including forest-owners, their associations and other stakeholders (e.g., municipalities, environmental NGOs, local citizens, research institutes and others).

A summary of these good practices is presented below.

## Summary of projects – initiatives collected

Title of the project/initiative	Fem 4 Forest - Forests in Women´s Hands (2020-2023)
Member State	Austria Fem 4 Forest - Forests in Women´s Hands (2020-2023)
Organisation name	Forstliche Ausbildungsstätte Pichl
Description	<p>The main objective of Fem4Forest was to strengthen the forest sector at local, regional and inter-regional levels through increased involvement and skills of women by supporting their involvement and capacity to engage in the forest sector in the Danube region.</p> <p>Fem4Forest identified and analysed the innovation needs of the forest related labour market and forest entrepreneurs. It also demonstrated the transferability of ideas and good practice examples by a series of pilot actions within the Danube region, to improve the ability of women to gain a foothold in the workforce and innovate their forest business to boost the competitiveness of the forest-based sector on the European market. The project offered new and innovative learning approaches and adapted to the needs identified, which is intended to support a more active role of women in the forestry sector.</p> <p>The planned activities were demand-driven and targeted three components: social inclusion, gender equality and economic independence. The variety of activities that were already taking place in different countries were analysed and presented through a benchmarking study and through the selection of good practice examples. An innovative approach for learning from each other and mentoring was established. The Fem4Forest model (demand driven action plan, awareness raising campaign, mentoring and training programme) for the integration of women was developed and tested through pilot actions. Fem4Forest aims to contribute to a higher employment rate in the Danube region, through tackling the long-term unemployment of women in rural areas.</p> <p>Due to its multi-actor approach, Fem4Forest led to the genuine and strong involvement of target groups, who engaged in a range of activities to voice their needs and co-create good practice examples.</p>
Link	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/fem4forest">https://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/fem4forest</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.forstfrauen.at/de/fem4forest">https://www.forstfrauen.at/de/fem4forest</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.fastpichl.at/projekt/fem4forest-ein-internationales-projekt-zur-staerkung-von-frauen-in-der-forstwirtschaft/">https://www.fastpichl.at/projekt/fem4forest-ein-internationales-projekt-zur-staerkung-von-frauen-in-der-forstwirtschaft/</a></li> </ul>
Funding	The project was funded by the INTERREG Transdanubia Program.

Title of the project/initiative	State Guidelines on Financial Compensation for Additional Efforts in NATURA 2000 Forests
Member State	Germany
Organisation name	European Committee German Forestry Council
Description	<p>After extensive consultation in a joint working group (over 2 years) with directly affected forest landowners, representatives from private forest owners and city-community forest owners, official state nature conservation and state forest management authorities, and Habitat NGOs, a compensation policy for Natura 2000 Forests in Mecklenburg-Pomerania was established for affected forest-land owners.</p> <p>The key success factors of the project relate to: the willingness of all actors to grant compensation payments to forest landowners; a willingness to negotiate between all involved parties; support from the authorities locally, including support from the EAFRD officials in the state government and from the European Commission (DG ENV); and the willingness of stakeholders to look beyond their own immediate interests to what was required to meet the future needs of the forests in Natura 2000 areas.</p> <p>Since the start of the compensation payments in 2016, the first official evaluation has been carried out and initial results confirm that the impact on biodiversity is positive, the willingness to cooperate on the side of affected forest landowners has increased.</p> <p>Outcomes achieved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acceptance of nature conservation tasks on managed forest land by forest owners;</li> <li>- Simplified bureaucracy due to digital forest integration in INVEKOS<sup>1</sup>-requirements;</li> <li>- Social recognition and appreciation of ecosystem services provided by forest owners;</li> <li>- Opportunity for further expansion of digital approaches for applying for compensation measures for other ecosystem services in the future;</li> <li>- Happy forest owners - happy nature - happy biodiversity;</li> </ul> <p>This project was implemented with a 2-year preparation and negotiation period (2014-2016), integration into INVEKOS<sup>1</sup> (2016), and extension until the end of 2024/25.</p>
Link	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <a href="http://www.waldbesitzer-mv.de">www.waldbesitzer-mv.de</a> (Official Homepage Private Forest landowner association);</li> <li>- <a href="http://www.wald-mv.de">www.wald-mv.de</a> (Official Homepage - State Forest)</li> </ul>
Funding	This initiative was funded by the EAFRD

<sup>1</sup> INVEKOS: a geographical information system developed by Agrarmarkt Austria to support the farmers of the European Union in fulfilling their obligations under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Title of the project/initiative	Arbeitskreis Forst (Forest Working Group)
Member State	Austria
Organisation name	Landwirtschaftskammer Steiermark (Steiermark Chamber of Agriculture)
Description	<p>The Arbeitskreis Forst is an educational programme for owners of small forests. The owners of small forests often have quite limited knowledge of forest management issues and the knowledge required also varies greatly depending on the region. Climate change is a big challenge, especially for these forest owners. In addition, the natural and economic potential of the forest is very often significantly underestimated.</p> <p>To address these issues, a group of forest owners meets four to six times a year to further their education (lectures, excursions, etc.). In addition to this, they record their operational activities in forest management including all expenditures and income, so that it is possible to examine the economics of forest management. The participants are very interested in multifunctional, sustainable, climate resilient and nature- oriented forest management, and the project provides them with valuable knowledge. Their forests secure an important part of their income and participating in the projects provides them with professional support in their daily work. The Arbeitskreis helps to detect the forests' potential.</p> <p>The project includes the following key components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provision of up-to-date thematic information;</li> <li>- Targeted group-oriented topics;</li> <li>- Exchange among participants;</li> <li>- Sharing of best practice examples;</li> <li>- Meetings held in regions.</li> </ul> <p>The project has been operating since 2001.</p>
Link	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <a href="https://www.arbeitskreisberatung-steiermark.at/?+Forst+&amp;id=2500%2C%2C1754097%2C">https://www.arbeitskreisberatung-steiermark.at/?+Forst+&amp;id=2500%2C%2C1754097%2C</a></li> <li>- <a href="https://www.fastpichl.at/projekt/erasmus-projekt-forest-forestry-operators-reflecting-on-equalising-skills-and-training/">https://www.fastpichl.at/projekt/erasmus-projekt-forest-forestry-operators-reflecting-on-equalising-skills-and-training/</a></li> </ul>
Funding	This initiative has been funded by EAFRD.

Title of the project/initiative	<b>Wald in Frauenhänden - Forests in Women´s Hands</b>
Member State	Austria
Organisation name	Forstliche Ausbildungsstätte Pichl
Description	<p>The Wald in Frauenhänden - Forests in Women´s Hands project organised seminars and forest excursions exclusively for female forest owners, future female forest owners and women who are interested in forestry to motivate them to manage their forests and to learn more about sustainable forest management, including topics such as silviculture multifunctionality, climate change, legal restrictions etc.</p> <p>Although women own forests, very often they do not have the necessary practical or theoretical education.</p> <p>The programmes organised as part of the project are characterised by:        (1) low threshold-offer: easily accessible, short duration (2-3 hours - essential for women with a lot of duties); and        (2) Specific programmes on relevant topics, adapted to participant´s needs: Short forest walks (approx. 2 hours) are held for each female forest owner focusing on topics which are crucial for managing one´s own forest successfully. Participants enjoy the forest walks and are look forward to these walks as part of their professional development. In this way, it is possible to bring current forestry knowledge to where it is urgently needed.</p> <p>The project started in 2011 and has become a well-known and permanent part of FAT Pichl´s education programme.</p>
Link	<a href="https://www.forstfrauen.at/de/aktuelles/193-waldspaziergaenge-fuer-frauen-waldtpyen-baumartenampeln">https://www.forstfrauen.at/de/aktuelles/193-waldspaziergaenge-fuer-frauen-waldtpyen-baumartenampeln</a>
Funding	This initiative has been funded by EAFRD.



Title of the project/initiative	<b>Savonian forest debate: Forests, forest relations and forest ownership in South Savo (2023-2024)</b>
Member State	Finland
Organisation name	Centre for Economic Development, Transport and Environment
Description	<p>The importance of forests has been identified as one of the three focus areas of the provincial strategy, in addition to food and water. In particular, improving the state of water and water bodies is closely linked to the activities of forests and forestry.</p> <p>Throughout history, the value and significance of forests in Finnish forest culture, have evolved over time. As a result of the climate and biodiversity crises, the role of forests has become part of the debate, including their role in providing solutions to these global megatrends. Various forest-related objectives are at odds with each other, and the public debate on forests has escalated. Forest owners and forestry professionals may feel that the work they do is being called into question.</p> <p>Forest ownership is in constant change. Approximately 40% of the forest owners in South Savo are remote forest owners who live outside the municipality where their forests are located. The economic dependence of forest owners on their forests has decreased and their goals have become more diverse. More and more forests are being managed for multiple purposes.</p> <p>According to the new forest owner statistics, there are approximately 440,800 private individuals in Finland who own at least two hectares of forest. The average size of privately owned forests is 41.9 hectares. (Finland's population is about 5.5 million).</p> <p>On average, forest owners are about 60 years old. The age structure of forest owners is strongly skewed towards the older age group. It is foreseen that there will be a large-scale generational change in the forest owner community in the near future. As a result, more and more people are becoming forest owners who do not necessarily know their forests and do not have the skills related to forest ownership or forestry. New generations are also less and less tied to their forests financially or mentally. Goals and expectations for the forests are becoming more diverse.</p> <p>Although forests are still passed on to the next generation as an inheritance in many families, the intangible, living cultural heritage associated with forest ownership is often not passed on. It is important to raise awareness amongst the families of forest owners to engage in intergenerational discussions about forests and their future and to prepare the future generation for the management and use of their forests.</p> <p>The Savonian forest debate project "Forests, forest relations and forest ownership" creates methods and practical ways for developing the</p>

Title of the project/initiative	Savonian forest debate: Forests, forest relations and forest ownership in South Savo (2023-2024)
	<p>appreciation of forests, forest ownership and forest professionalism. The approach is based on the forest relationship approach identified in the Finnish National Forest Strategy. The project explores the possibilities of utilising forest relationships to support the decision-making of forest owners and future forest owners and to promote a more appreciative and multi-voiced public debate on forests.</p> <p>Project components: The project focuses on the following questions and targets:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Increasing the forest debate at the provincial level and to develop the discussion into a multi-voiced and appreciative one;</li> <li>(2) Increasing the capacity of forest professionals to participate in the forest debate at local level;</li> <li>(3) Further development and implementation of the forest relationship method created by Finnish Forest Museum Lusto;</li> <li>(4) Protecting, preserving and practising intangible, living forest cultural heritage; and</li> <li>(5) Raising the awareness of forest owners and future forest owners about the value of their forests, taking into account their multiple use and sustainability.</li> </ol> <p>The project has received a lot of public interest around the question: What will the next generation do with the forests? The forests have given the region the opportunity for economic growth, the inheritance of its own culture and the knowledge of the forest passed down from generation to generation. The rotation period of the forest is more than 100 years, how will the next generation continue to maintain it?</p> <p>The project will be implemented in 2023-2024.</p>
Link	n/a
Funding	This initiative is funded by the Common Agricultural Policy.

Title of the project/initiative	Climate-smart Ostrobothnian forests
Member State	Finland
Organisation name	Suomen metsäkeskus/The Finnish Forest Centre
Description	<p>Climate-smart Ostrobothnian forests is a training project managed by the Finnish Forestry Centre for forest owners in the Southern Ostrobothnia region. The main goal is to increase forest owners' understanding and know-how concerning climate-smart and sustainable forest management practices.</p> <p>The training sessions were run by expert trainers. The success was indicated by very high NPS (net promoter score)<sup>2</sup> values. The training provided forest owners with greater awareness and know-how about climate-smart forest management. Different options for forest ownership were explained to enable different forest ownership arrangements to be implemented, taking into account the tax implications. The sessions also included information on the valuation of forest land, timber trade and forest investment, as well as the diversity of forest nature.</p> <p>The need for climate smart approaches and sustainable forest management was justified by explaining how these elements impact the property value. When you understand the (monetary) value of your forests, you are also willing to invest in them.</p> <p>90 training events have been held and there have been 2,500 participants so far. The goal was to deliver 96 training events with 1,735 participants.</p> <p>The project responded to the needs expressed by forest owners for research-based information about climate-smart forestry and the use of forests, as well as forest ownership arrangements and the value of forests.</p> <p>The project started in 2019 and will be completed within 2023.</p>
Link	<a href="https://www.metsakeskus.fi/fi/hankkeet/ilmastoviisaat-pohjalaismetsat">https://www.metsakeskus.fi/fi/hankkeet/ilmastoviisaat-pohjalaismetsat</a>
Funding	This initiative has been funded by the Common Agricultural Policy.

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<sup>2</sup> A metric used in customer experience programs, measured with a single-question survey. It measures the loyalty of a company's customer base with a score from -100 to +100.

Title of the project/initiative	<b>Welfare from forestry and nature products (Hyvinvointia metsän elinkeinoista)</b>
Member State	Finland
Organisation name	Finnish Forest Centre
Description	<p>Forest ownership in Finland is very fragmented - about half a million Finnish citizens own 60% of the Finnish forests. The average size of forest holdings is 30 ha which is considered a very small property in boreal forestry.</p> <p>The project organised training and education as well as personal advisory sessions for forest owners to encourage the sustainable management of their forests. It responded to the need to avoid the abandonment of forest areas, because if the forests are not managed, all kinds of risks arise, e.g., forest fires and insect damage risks. While mainstream forest training usually concentrates on wood production, these events sought to target a different group by focusing on the potential for marketing non-wood production values (nature products) from the forests.</p> <p>The key factors of success were that events were practical and interesting. The events included visits to small-scale manufacturing companies and field training in forest sites. The good quality content of the events and effective marketing in social media (emails, Twitter, Facebook, etc.) met the needs of the target group.</p> <p><u>Key outcomes:</u> Forest owners created side businesses in addition to “business as usual forestry”. This is important, especially when most of the forest owners have forestry as a side livelihood. The project introduced practices for producing nature products hand in hand with wood production. The project also promoted the employment of young people in rural areas. The project has organised more than 50 advisory events in the forest. In addition, 60 individual appointments for the owners concerning his/her forests have been carried out. In total, 3000 forest owners were contacted through the project. Training materials, e.g., podcasts, were produced concerning nature products, Christmas trees and about the employment of young people.</p> <p>The project was implemented in 2022-2023.</p>
Link	<a href="https://www.metsakeskus.fi/fi/hankkeet/hyvinvointia-metsan-elinkeinoista">https://www.metsakeskus.fi/fi/hankkeet/hyvinvointia-metsan-elinkeinoista</a> <a href="https://www.proagria.fi/hankkeet/hyvinvointia-metsan-elinkeinoista-2022-2023">https://www.proagria.fi/hankkeet/hyvinvointia-metsan-elinkeinoista-2022-2023</a>
Funding	This initiative has been funded by the Common Agricultural Policy.

Title of the project/initiative	Productive forest ownership (Tuottava metsänomistus)
Member State	Finland
Organisation name	Finnish Forest Centre
Description	<p>This project is an example of education of forest owners and was implemented between 2020-2022.</p> <p>Forest ownership in Finland is very fragmented. About half a million Finns own 60% of the Finnish forests. These forests are owned by families and typically the next generation eventually takes over the care of the holding. The average size of a holding is around 30 hectares.</p> <p>In this project, the Finnish Forestry Centre organised training in small groups for a total of 160 people in 6 locations in southwestern Finland. The subject was the situation regarding generational renewal of the forest farm. Finally, because of the COVID pandemic, training could be organised only in 4 locations. In 2 locations, the training was organised virtually. Every group met eight times and focused every time on one specific subject area.</p> <p>The size of the group varied from around 20 to 30 participants. In addition, the participants could participate in webinars related to the topic and familiarise themselves with self-study materials.</p> <p>The key success factors were having multiple small group meetings with the same people attending. The courage of the participants to ask questions and discuss increased with each meeting. The high-quality content of the training and versatile opportunities for participation offered everyone good opportunities to participate.</p> <p>In addition to alternatives and ways of going about generational change on forest farms, the participants received information on the profitability of forestry, the effects of climate change, and sustainable forestry. Participants had the opportunity to consider different options and create well-considered solutions. This way, forest owners could save money, for example in terms of taxation. Virtual methods of participation and self-study material gave participants the option of being able to carry out their own research too. The initiative facilitated meetings of people in the same situation, they had good conversations and received peer support from each other.</p>
Link	<a href="https://www.metsakeskus.fi/fi/hankkeet/tuottava-metsanomistus">https://www.metsakeskus.fi/fi/hankkeet/tuottava-metsanomistus</a>
Funding	This initiative has been funded by the Common Agricultural Policy.

Title of the project/initiative	<b>Thuringian Guidelines for the Promotion of Forestry Measures</b>
Member State	Germany
Organisation name	Thuringian Ministry for Agriculture and Forestry
Description	<p>This initiative is an example of provision of regional government guidelines.</p> <p>The "Thuringian Guidelines for the Promotion of Forestry Measures" grants financial support for the development of stable, site-appropriate forests and for the preservation of the ecological and economic performance of forests. The funding also aims to take account of nature conservation concerns and to support preventive measures against damage in forests or the management of the consequences of such damage. The aim is to establish and maintain long-term and sustainable near-natural forest management, to safeguard the diverse functions of the forest and to support the adaptation of forests to climate change.</p> <p>State funds are used to support forest owners in the processing of damaged wood, reforestation, and forest fire protection, among other things. According to the ministry's assessment, there is a very high demand for funding opportunities.</p> <p>According to the ministry, forest enterprises incur significant costs in rehabilitating damaged areas and planting more climate and pest resistant trees. Costs can amount to more than 10,000 euros per hectare.</p> <p>The measures available, according to the framework plan of the "Joint Task for the Improvement of Agricultural Structures and Coastal Protection" (GAK) (German co-financing Federal State - Länder) are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Near-natural forest management</li> <li>B Forestry infrastructure</li> <li>C Forestry associations</li> <li>D Initial afforestation</li> <li>K Management of extreme weather events</li> <li>L Contractual nature conservation in the forest</li> </ul> <p><u>Measures in the rural development plan without GAK participation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>E Forest environmental measures</li> <li>F Conservation of forest genetic resources</li> <li>G Prevention of calamities</li> <li>H Investment in forest environmental measures</li> <li>I Soil protection liming</li> <li>J Biodiversity and adaptation to climate change</li> </ul>

Title of the project/initiative	<b>Thuringian Guidelines for the Promotion of Forestry Measures</b>
	<p>The funds are used to support owners in the processing of damaged timber, reforestation, and forest fire protection.</p> <p>These guidelines have been implemented since 2021. Continued support was renewed in 2022.</p>
Link	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://verwaltung.bund.de/leistungsverzeichnis/EN/leistung/99148134080000/herausgeber/TH-212280189/region/16">https://verwaltung.bund.de/leistungsverzeichnis/EN/leistung/99148134080000/herausgeber/TH-212280189/region/16</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://infrastruktur-landwirtschaft.thueringen.de/fileadmin/Forst und Jagd Fischerei/Forstwirtschaft/Waldbesitzer/Thueringer Landesprogramm Wald Wetterfolgen konsolidiert.pdf">https://infrastruktur-landwirtschaft.thueringen.de/fileadmin/Forst und Jagd Fischerei/Forstwirtschaft/Waldbesitzer/Thueringer Landesprogramm Wald Wetterfolgen konsolidiert.pdf</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://landesrecht.thueringen.de/bsth/document/VVTH-VVTH000010487">https://landesrecht.thueringen.de/bsth/document/VVTH-VVTH000010487</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.thueringenforst.de/angebote-produkte/forstamtsservice/forstfoerderung">https://www.thueringenforst.de/angebote-produkte/forstamtsservice/forstfoerderung</a></li> </ul>
Funding	This initiative has been funded by the ERDF.

Title of the project/initiative	<b>FORTRA. Promoting regional bioeconomy through digitalization</b>
Member State	Spain
Organisation name	Private individual
Description	<p>FORTRA (Forest Traceability) is a digital tool promoted by the regional government Xunta de Galicia that is made available to forest companies and consumers with the aim of providing traceability for wood products, and with the aim of recording the operations carried out by all the companies that form part of the transformation process, from the forest to the market product. For companies, it allows them to build a network to digitally connect the entire value chain of the Galician wood sector, so that they can inform customers and consumers of the characteristics of their wood products, including their carbon footprint, as well as the forest of origin and the operations that were necessary for their processing.</p> <p>FORTRA products are labelled with a QR code that the consumer can scan with a mobile phone to discover the origin of the wood used in that product, how it was made, the processes used, and its impact on the planet.</p> <p>In order to increase awareness of climate change and the impact of consumers' purchasing decisions, it is necessary for companies to provide reliable information to help inform responsible decisions in terms of selecting sustainable products with a low carbon footprint. For the development of the tool, collaboration from different stakeholders was crucial for defining the needs and the possibilities of the type of information to be included in the system, as well as for testing it. There was active participation from forest owners and</p>

Title of the project/initiative	FORTRA. Promoting regional bioeconomy through digitalization
	<p>managers, as well as the different industries and the regional government. The software is free to use and available in Galician, Spanish and English.</p> <p>The information that the QR code provides is as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Product name</li> <li>2. Technical characteristics</li> <li>3. Name of the company that manufactured it</li> <li>4. Date of manufacture</li> <li>5. Number of units in the lot</li> <li>6. Carbon footprint, in kilograms.</li> <li>7. Commitment to regeneration - deforestation 0</li> <li>8. <a href="#">PEFC</a> (Programme for the endorsement of forest certification), FSC certification or quality label "Pino de Galicia".</li> </ol> <p>As for the origin of the wood, the following information is shown:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cutting batch</li> <li>2. Tons and percentage of use of each batch</li> <li>3. Location (place and cadastral reference)</li> <li>4. File number and date / cutting license</li> <li>5. Cartographic location, coordinates</li> <li>6. Species, volume, absorbed CO2</li> <li>7. Forest certification</li> <li>8. Photographs of the plot (optional)</li> <li>9. Other data related to the harvest</li> </ol> <p>Finally, the following information about the processing operations that resulted in the product is also shown:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Company that carried out the operation</li> <li>2. Date of operation</li> <li>3. Lot serial number</li> <li>4. Number of units in the lot</li> <li>5. Geographic location of the transformation centre</li> <li>6. Batch photography (optional)</li> <li>7. Additional information on batch characteristics</li> </ol> <p>With the FORTRA project, Xunta de Galicia intends to promote the use of local products (made and manufactured in Galicia), as well as responsible purchasing (products with low or no carbon footprint) and respect for the environment (legal origin, obligation to regenerate after logging or forest certification).</p> <p>FORTRA is part of the objective of the Galician Forest Plan 2021-2040 "Towards carbon neutrality" to achieve digitalised and technological forests, as well as to develop active forest management to increase the capacity of the forests to sequester carbon, and to increase the resilience of the forest to climate change. It has been</p>



Title of the project/initiative	<b>FORTRA. Promoting regional bioeconomy through digitalization</b>
	<p>carried out by the Council of Rural Affairs and the Galician Centre for Technological Modernisation.</p> <p>In addition, the tool includes a public, transparent and reliable traceability system through the use of blockchain technology, which tracks all the transformation steps of the product, from the origin (forest) to the final product for sale. In this way, the products receive transparency and credibility, presenting to customers as local (km 0), with a low or even negative carbon footprint, deforestation free, under sustainable forest management criteria, and certified (PEFC / FSC) if that is the case.</p> <p>In this way, FORTRA adds value to the product, increasing the competitiveness of the company to reach the market, improving the integrity of the value chain and the due diligence system. It should be noted that blockchain technology ensures that data cannot be manipulated or erased once entered and signed in each stage in the chain, which offers a guarantee of authenticity and transparency.</p> <p>Furthermore, the application provides information about the companies participating in the value chain, companies that are usually small enterprises located in rural areas and are essential for keeping rural areas alive, fostering the regional bioeconomy. The project started in 2021.</p>
Link	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://fortra.xunta.gal/">https://fortra.xunta.gal/</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://fortra.xunta.gal/fortra/traza/XILONOR-2003681995-1-1">https://fortra.xunta.gal/fortra/traza/XILONOR-2003681995-1-1</a></li> </ul>
Funding	n/a

Title of the project/initiative	<b>Biosphere reserve Voxnadalen</b>
Member State	Sweden
Organisation name	Swedish Forest Agency
Description	<p>In June 2019, <a href="#">Unesco designated Voxnadalen as a biosphere reserve</a> in the catchment area of river Voxnan. As a biosphere reserve, Voxnadalen is part of a worldwide network that contributes to the implementation of the UN's Global Goals for Sustainable Development, Agenda 2030. Sustainable development means ensuring human well-being, both today and for future generations. In this context, healthy and functioning ecosystems are a basic prerequisite for societal development and human welfare.</p> <p>Biosphere area Voxnadalen is a neutral meeting place for collaboration between different stakeholders. The aim is to promote broad collaboration processes and initiate project activities where all three aspects of sustainable development - environmental, social, and economic - are included. Geographically, the biosphere area starts from the river Voxnan's catchment area. The biosphere area covers the two provinces of Hälsingland and Dalarna, as well as the four</p>

Title of the project/initiative	Biosphere reserve Voxnadalen
	<p>municipalities of Ovanåker, Ljusdal, Bollnäs and Rättvik. The total area is approximately 342,000 ha and the number of inhabitants in the area is approximately 13,200. Edsbyn and Alfta are the biosphere area's two largest urban areas.</p> <p>The local municipalities are highly engaged with specific, clear objectives for the work required. They have included different stakeholders in helping set these objectives and have included them in the implementation of the activities in the area.</p> <p>Voxnadalen Biosphere reserve is a model for sustainable development and contributes to the implementation of Agenda 2030, above all with a focus on forest, water, and the open cultural landscape. It:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• works for and supports initiatives that contribute to an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable development in Voxnadalen.</li> <li>• is run in a way that is open and inclusive.</li> <li>• is a neutral arena for collaborative processes between different stakeholders.</li> </ul> <p>Voxnadalen Biosphere reserve has three focus areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The forest as a sustainable resource;</li> <li>2. Living water; and</li> <li>3. An open and living landscape</li> </ol> <p>Within each focus area, different activities and projects are carried out to/for which focus groups with different stakeholders can be linked and engaged.</p> <p>The project started in 2019 and is ongoing.</p>
Link	<a href="https://www.ovanaker.se/boendeochmiljo/klimatochmiljo/biosfaromradevoxnadalen.947.html">https://www.ovanaker.se/boendeochmiljo/klimatochmiljo/biosfaromradevoxnadalen.947.html</a>
Funding	n/a

Title of the project/initiative	<b>ROSEWOOD 4.0 EU Network of regions on sustainable wood mobilisation ready for digitalisation</b>
Member State	Croatia
Organisation name	Competence Centre Ltd. for research and development
Description	<p>ROSEWOOD4.0 harnesses digital solutions and boosts knowledge transfer to connect multiple actors along the forest value chain to reinforce the sustainability of wood mobilisation in Europe. The project builds on the ROSEWOOD network of regional hubs, extending this well-established network both in terms of geographical reach and the breadth of tools and solutions shared with stakeholders across Europe. The focus is on digitalisation and digital tools for knowledge transfer, training and coaching, and enabling practitioners to share know-how to enable wider impact. ROSEWOOD4.0 gives actors in the wood mobilisation value chain increased opportunities for sharing good practices in the field and provides access to a wider range of technological and non-technological innovations.</p> <p>The focus on digital platforms and digital training solutions addresses an identified gap, where the forestry sector lags behind in terms of its adaptation to and spreading modern ICT solutions. This contributes to two main challenges in wood mobilisation in Europe, namely access to primary resources and transparency of the market.</p> <p>This is an interdisciplinary, cross-sectoral and multi-actor approach uniting all stakeholders from the value chain of the forestry and wood industries to find solutions to the same topic - sustainable wood mobilisation.</p> <p>Sustainable wood mobilisation ready for digitalisation includes all stakeholders within the forestry and wood industry value chains from the tree in the forest all the way to the final products with high added value.</p> <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open innovation and partnerships along the value-chain and across sectors involving multiple-actors</li> <li>• Efficient knowledge transfer between regions</li> <li>• Promotion of sustainable wood mobilisation and use of additional sources of wood as new income models for forestry sector as well as for rural (and urban) areas</li> <li>• Development of materials in digital form to boost knowledge transfer widely across Europe and especially in rural communities</li> <li>• Development of a new Central-Eastern Hub</li> <li>• The transfer of best practices adapted to regional conditions</li> <li>• An extensive dissemination of best practices and research results in wood mobilisation through the development of specific and easy to use materials, videos, a centralised database, study visits, etc.</li> <li>• Support to the implementation of best practices.</li> </ul>
Link	<a href="https://rosewood-network.eu/">https://rosewood-network.eu/</a> <a href="https://www.forestinnovationhubs.rosewood-network.eu">https://www.forestinnovationhubs.rosewood-network.eu</a> <a href="https://rosewood-network.eu/resources/training/">https://rosewood-network.eu/resources/training/</a>

Title of the project/initiative	<b>ROSEWOOD 4.0 EU Network of regions on sustainable wood mobilisation ready for digitalisation</b>
	<a href="https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/862681">https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/862681</a> <a href="https://www.linkedin.com/in/rosewood-network/">https://www.linkedin.com/in/rosewood-network/</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/NetworkRosewood">https://twitter.com/NetworkRosewood</a> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/NetworkROSEWOOD/">https://www.facebook.com/NetworkROSEWOOD/</a> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/@rosewood4.0network98">https://www.youtube.com/@rosewood4.0network98</a>
Funding	The ROSEWOOD4.0 initiative has been funded by Horizon2020. ROSEWOOD (HORIZON2020) 2018-2020 ROSEWOOD 4.0 (HORIZON2020) 2020-2022

Title of the project/initiative	<b>GOFORESTS - European innovation partnership network promoting operational groups dedicated to forestry and agroforestry</b>
Member State	Croatia
Organisation name	Competence Centre Ltd. for research and development
Description	<p>Innovation is a key priority for the private forestry and agroforestry sector, and nationally/locally funded EIP-AGRI Operational Groups (OGs) can play a key role in driving innovation at the EU level. However, the results of the OGs in forestry and agro-forestry have not been disseminated to all EU countries, because the various local/national OGs have not been linked to the experiences of other countries and the knowledge generated has only been shared locally.</p> <p>In order to disseminate the knowledge generated by the OGs in forestry and agroforestry to all EU regions, GOFORESTS will set up multi-actor innovation interregional transversal Hubs dealing with 5 innovation topics ('Wood mobilisation', 'Forest adaptation to climate change', 'Improving approaches, models and tools for sustainable forest management and ecosystem service provision to improve economic, environmental and social benefits for rural areas', 'non-wood forest products', 'Agroforestry') to facilitate interregional transfer of knowledge generated by the OGs.</p> <p>GOFORESTS will collect, share, and disseminate knowledge related to innovations from forestry and agro-forestry OGs. This will be done by providing tailored and understandable dissemination materials, and by making them accessible through existing platforms. Capacity building materials will also be developed according to identified regional needs and transferred to where the innovation can be applied.</p> <p>GOFORESTS will also discuss and present the benefits of OGs relevant to the Green Deal to EU policy makers. In addition, GOFORESTS will establish connections with policy makers working with the CAP and innovation at the local level, particularly in countries where OGs dealing with forestry and agro-forestry are not funded, to</p>

Title of the project/initiative	<b>GOFORESTS - European innovation partnership network promoting operational groups dedicated to forestry and agroforestry</b>
	<p>promote new initiatives and a greater geographic balance between different EU regions.</p> <p>This project was launched in 2023 and programmed to be completed in 2025.</p>
Link	<a href="https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101086216">https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101086216</a>
Funding	This initiative is funded by HORIZON EUROPE.

Title of the project/initiative	<b>The 4H-Polku Metsästä Ammatiksi project, Forest as a profession.</b>
Member State	Finland
Organisation name	Kainuun ELY-keskus
Description	<p>The aim of this project is to bring awareness about forestry and forestry professions to secondary school children and to provide information to them about employment opportunities in the sector.</p> <p>The Kajaani 4H Association's forestry project organises forestry exploration days each year. These days involve presentations about professions in the forestry sector, new opportunities, innovations, practical experiments, and practical work steps.</p> <p>Forestry is under the spotlight because of its important role in helping achieve climate targets and biodiversity. The participants are made aware that the forestry sector is taking sustainable forestry into account. A visit by experts to schools is a good way of highlighting responsibility for nature.</p> <p>The interest in forestry as a profession has been rising. There have been more students wanting to study forestry studies for example in KAO, a vocational school in Kajaani.</p> <p>The project has already reached almost 1,000 schoolchildren and partners over 2 years (2021-2023).</p>
Link	<a href="https://kajaani.4h.fi/hankkeet/4h-polku-metsasta-ammatiksi-2021-20/">https://kajaani.4h.fi/hankkeet/4h-polku-metsasta-ammatiksi-2021-20/</a> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/4H-Polku-Mets%C3%A4st%C3%A4-Ammatiksi-hanke-342839133551990/">https://www.facebook.com/4H-Polku-Mets%C3%A4st%C3%A4-Ammatiksi-hanke-342839133551990/</a>
Funding	n/a

Title of the project/initiative	<b>Mosaico Extremadura</b>
Member State	Spain
Organisation name	University of Extremadura
Description	<p>Sierra de Gata is a mountainous area in southwestern Spain prone to anthropogenic fires. It extends over 150,000 ha, of which 70,000 ha are forests of <i>Pinus pinaster</i>, and comprises a population of 22,728 in 20 villages. In 2016, a wildfire burned nearly 8,000 ha and forced the evacuation of 3 villages in the upper catchment of the Gata River. The Mosaico-Extremadura project is being implemented to restore a mosaic landscape less prone to fire. The project is based on the idea that agricultural and forestry interventions (i.e., tree farming, livestock grazing, silvicultural activities) implemented by farmers at strategic locations will function as effective and productive fire breaks that will reduce fire risk.</p> <p>The key success factors of the project include government support, local leadership, partnerships between scientists, local governments and local people, and a shared perception of the problem.</p> <p>This initiative has been implemented through collaboration with 2 LIFE projects.</p> <p>The project aimed: 1) to transform the Sierra de Gata forests into a landscape less prone to wildfires; and 2) to promote social entrepreneurship and agricultural and forestry-based livelihood activities.</p> <p>Agricultural and forestry interventions provided safer zones for fire attacks and contributed to mitigate wildfire risk in Sierra de Gata. They also provided socio-economic benefits and stimulated agricultural and forestry-based livelihood activities.</p>
Link	<a href="https://proyectoefes.es/project/proyecto-mosaico/">https://proyectoefes.es/project/proyecto-mosaico/</a> A relevant presentation is accessible from this <a href="#">page</a> .
Funding	n/a

Title of the project/initiative	Network of forest owners - Interreg Project Askafor
Member State	Germany, Belgium, France, Luxembourg
Organisation name	Pro Silva Europe
Description	<p>The project Askafor created several networks of foresters that met 6 times over 2 years. The meeting included visits to their own forests to discuss how they could make the transition to Continuous Cover Forestry/Close-to-nature forestry. Continuous cover forestry is a type of forestry that is climate resilient, but also economically resilient (low investment at the beginning, mix of species, etc.).</p> <p>The main aim of continuous cover forestry is to produce high quality wood, with high added-value. This, alongside a clear strategy to value wood from forests managed in this way in Europe, is the key to more sustainable rural development in rural areas.</p> <p>The forest owners that make the transition to continuous cover forestry are not alone during the transition, but they can exchange and learn from each other.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The forest owners are accompanied by specialists (from the Forêt.Nature association) to help them make the transition, prior to ongoing peer-to-peer learning.</li> <li>2. The exchanges are always in the forest of the network members. As a consequence, the training is very practical and concrete for them.</li> </ol> <p>Although the project has been completed, the network continues. The forest owners and the associations created under this project continue to discuss and meet to discuss the transition of forest management.</p> <p>This initiative was an Interreg Great Region project.</p>
Link	<p><a href="http://www.askafor.eu">www.askafor.eu</a></p> <p><a href="https://askafor.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ASK-broch-gest-EN.pdf">https://askafor.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ASK-broch-gest-EN.pdf</a></p> <p>A relevant presentation is accessible from this <a href="#">page</a>.</p>
Funding	INTERREG (Great Region project)

Title of the project/initiative	Vilhelmina Model Forest
Member State	Sweden
Organisation name	Swedish Forest Agency
Description	<p>Over the past few decades, there has been intense discussion as to which forestry practices should be used in the western parts of Vilhelmina Municipality. Conflict over how to manage the Blaikfjället and Njakafjäll areas specifically was subject to substantial public interest during the 1980s and 1990s. The main landowner, Vilhelmina Municipality, had planned harvesting operations in the old-growth forests of Njakafjäll, but these operations were strongly opposed by environmental organisations. In the end, both areas became nature reserves.</p> <p>Discussions about competing uses of the forests are ongoing. Dominating the discussions today are issues related to environmental sustainability and land access rights for indigenous migrant reindeer herders vis-à-vis forest practices. In terms of practical activities, the main focus is the environmental adaptation of hydro power production in the catchment area of the river Ångermanälven.</p> <p>Vilhelmina is located in the transition area from boreal to alpine zones. The area is a typical coniferous-dominated landscape of inland northern Sweden. It is variable in its topography, from about 340 metres above sea level up to 1000 metres. There is a great variety of natural habitats and a certain degree of disturbance by forestry. Some 350,000 hectares are productive forestland, dominated by mature forests (80 years or more). The proportion of old forests increases going westward, as does the proportion of forests with high natural values. The most common tree species are spruce, pine and birch. About half of the people who live in Vilhelmina municipality own some forest property. Around 100 Sami people are organised in indigenous reindeer herding communities. Forestry is an important component of Vilhelmina's economy. More than 100 people are employed as truck drivers or have other forestry-related occupations. For the informal economy and cultural heritage of the community, as well as for the well-being of the citizens, the forest is of vital importance for supporting hunting, berry picking, fishing and recreational activities.</p> <p>Between 2012 and 2017, Vilhelmina Model Forest took part in a number of projects, e.g.: Baltic Landscape; PLURAL; Integral; Arange. Within the projects, collaborations were developed on different topics and between different actors such as researchers, Vilhelmina municipality, NGOs and citizens.</p> <p>Strategic goals of the Vilhelmina Model Forest are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To increase knowledge and improve decision making for the use of the different values of the landscape through cooperation and practical efforts;</li> <li>• To support research for the concrete development of sustainable use of the landscape and its different values;</li> </ul>



Title of the project/initiative	Vilhelmina Model Forest
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To work to secure local support and local exchange of all current activities within and linked to Vilhelmina Model Forest;</li> <li>• To increase exchanges with other Model Forests and similar initiatives, both nationally and internationally.</li> </ul> <p>Key actions in place to achieve these goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of thematic groups working on water and climate issues, alternative forestry methods and social values of the forest;</li> <li>• Build stakeholder capacity through the development and participation in networking activities;</li> <li>• River restoration activities;</li> <li>• Establishment and development of demonstration sites;</li> <li>• Research activities within and about the Model Forest landscape;</li> <li>• Strengthen partnerships and participate in exchanges between the Model Forests in Sweden and the seven participating sites in the Baltic Sea Region;</li> <li>• Release of a periodic newsletter to share knowledge, lessons learned and information about ongoing work.</li> </ul> <p>Key impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of the demonstration sites for visits and thematic programmes;</li> <li>• Continued theoretical and practical work with the river Ångermanälven;</li> <li>• The formation of a nature reserve highlighting social values of the forest;</li> <li>• Co-operation between the municipality and researchers in the development of municipal comprehensive planning through an extended landscape perspective and an improved participation process</li> </ul>
Link	<a href="https://imfn.net/regional-networks/vilhelmina-model-forest/">https://imfn.net/regional-networks/vilhelmina-model-forest/</a>
Funding	Partly EU-funded. A part of this initiative has been funded by EU funds (e.g., the project Arange: <a href="http://www.arange-project.eu/?page_id=8">http://www.arange-project.eu/?page_id=8</a> )

Title of the project/initiative	<b>Association of Slovenian Private Forest Owners</b>
Member State	Slovenia
Organisation name	Chamber of agriculture and forestry of Slovenia
Description	<p>The Slovenian Forest owners` association was established to represent forest owners` interests and timber marketing. The first - and now well-established activity – was the auction of more valuable wood assortments. The auction in Slovenj Gradec is one of the most successful auctions of quality logs in Central Europe. Every year, a large number of forest owners from all over Slovenia participate in the sale, and the open day is attended by thousands of visitors from Slovenia and abroad. The activity promotes the use of broad leaf species, including minority species that are more resilient to climate change.</p> <p>Slovenian forestry has long tradition of close to nature forestry that produces regular timber as well as a percentage of high value timber. The last 17 auctions have helped more than 5,000 forest owners trade around 30 million Euros of high value timber. This initiative has been ongoing for the past 17 years.</p>
Link	<a href="https://www.gozd-les.com/novice/2023/rezultati-17-drazbe-lesa-slovenj-gradcu-2023">https://www.gozd-les.com/novice/2023/rezultati-17-drazbe-lesa-slovenj-gradcu-2023</a>
Funding	n/a

