

## **EUSTAFOR's Strategy 2019-2021**

### **I. Challenges and Developments:**

Today, society, political systems and State Forest Management Organizations of European countries are facing serious multiple challenges and developments, such as:

- Climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Economic performances: a need for a Competitive Forest-Based Sector to contribute to decent rural and urban livelihoods, green growth and jobs
- Efficient use of available natural resources
- Shift from a fossil-based economy to a bio-based and circular economy
- Societal changes: changing Europeans' perception and growing expectations towards forests and forestry, mutual impacts of globalization, urbanization and digitalization and the need for better response (communication) and outreach
- Environmental integrity, including ensuring biodiversity and the provision of multiple services and benefits from forests
- Recognition of all the values delivered by forests and forest management
- Need for a new international forest governance system and effective coordination of forest-related policies at EU level

These multiple demands create new areas of interest and possible conflicts – challenges and opportunities – for both EUSTAFOR and its member organizations.

Consequently, EUSTAFOR must identify ways to effectively contribute to and cope with all these challenges and challenging developments.

### **II. Strategic Policy Areas & Topics**

The following strategic policy areas and topics are relevant for EUSTAFOR activities:

- Climate change (CC) and its impacts on European state forests and their management – balancing mitigation and adaptation needs
- State Forest Management in the context of the bioeconomy and the circular economy, including the role of forest-based renewable energy
- Multiple purpose forestry as a provider of income, social benefits and ecosystem services
- Biodiversity including protected area management

### **III. Vision and Mission**

#### **EUSTAFOR - Strong Voice for Sustainability and Use of Forest Resources**

EUSTAFOR is recognized as a strong and well-coordinated voice of European state forest management organizations at EU and pan-European levels.

EUSTAFOR member organizations provide valuable, professional and experience-based knowledge about the sustainable and multifunctional management of state-owned forests in order to support European forestry-relevant policy objectives.

EUSTAFOR shares the pan-European definition and principles of sustainable forest management developed by FOREST EUROPE (1) as well as the objectives and guiding principles of the EU Forest Strategy(2).

EUSTAFOR serves as a common platform for its members to share experiences and to learn from each other. As a forum for European State Forest Management Organizations, EUSTAFOR brings the positive results of the management of state forests as a contribution, particularly in terms of achieving European sustainability strategies.

EUSTAFOR promotes active use of forest resources, which enables the provision of a wide array of renewable raw materials and related ecosystem services as a relevant basis for the bio-based economy.

### **IV. Strategic AGENDA**

For the period 2019-2021, EUSTAFOR's Strategic Agenda is set for the policy areas listed below. For each policy area, strategic challenges, strategic objectives and success factors are described. Finally, the annual action plan and leading statements for communicating the relevant strategy areas complete this document.

---

<sup>1</sup> Sustainable forest management means using forests and forest land in a way, and at a rate, that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfill, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions, at local, national, and global levels, and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems. (Source: Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe. Helsinki 1993).

<sup>2</sup> COM(2013) 659 final

## **A. Climate change (CC) and the Impacts on Forest Ecosystems and State Forest Management Organizations**

Strategic challenges:

- Growing mitigation pressure on European forests as carbon sinks – balancing mitigation and adaptation needs
- Acceleration of CC-impacts in terms of intensity, quantity, diversity (windfalls, pests (bark beetle infestations), diseases, extreme weather phenomena: heat waves and droughts, forest fires, storms, extreme rainfalls, floods, etc...) that hit European forests and challenge SFMOs with significant damage, the introduction of adaptation measures and new risk management strategies and processes.
- Significant/tremendous economic impacts of periodic oversupplies of raw material and collapsing timber markets
- Negative impacts on biodiversity
- In case of negative economic results: no capital left/available for investments and establishment of other business areas

Strategic objectives:

- Appropriate communication and outreach to raise awareness
- Strengthen resilience of forest ecosystems (tree species composition, genetic fit, multi-layer stands, silvicultural practices enabling permanent forest cover, etc.)
- Clarify the role of forestry and forest management (potentials & limits) in the spotlight of climate change and how this role should be communicated
- Advocating any pro-active use of wood and wood products in all product-life & use cycles with the aim of long-term storage (carbon sequestration) of atmospheric carbon dioxide, including progressive carbon fixing by incrementing timber volume

Measures to be taken:

- European wide exchange of know-how and documentation (knowledge management) on how to cope with climate change in the context of sustainable forest management
- Awareness-raising activities amplifying the total (life cycle) value chain of forest management and forest-based products compared to fossil fuels and fossil-based products
- Conference on SFMOs' best practices on Climate Change in 2020
- Annual Forest Day (EU & Member State Level) to discuss CC impacts and challenges on forests and its consequences for SFMOs

## **B. Bioeconomy and Circular Economy in the Context of State Forest Management**

Strategic challenges:

- Active positioning of SFMOs as crucial players in the forest-based bioeconomy system & sector
- Becoming included in the theory of a broader circular economy
- Creating serious awareness and societal recognition of sustainable forest management in the context of the bioeconomy
- Limited innovation efforts in the forest-related sector to move from a fossil-based to a bio-based economy

Strategic objectives:

- Achieving increased value for a forest-based bioeconomy in a wider circular economy within the limits of sustainable and multifunctional forest management
- Identify limits and potential for additional mobilization of biomass
- Support actions to develop new markets for wood-based products
- Participate in relevant European and national strategic bioeconomy initiatives
- Demonstrate the societal gains of multifunctional and sustainable forest management as well as of forest services and products

Measures to be taken:

- Develop, create and communicate forest-based solutions with reference to the bioeconomy
- Significantly raise awareness and recognition of wood and non-wood products among policymakers in the circular economy
- Advocate the value and positive external effects of forest-based bioeconomy commodities
- Measuring and accounting for SFMOs' contributions to a (competitive) European green economy

### **C. Multiple Purpose Forestry as a Provider of Social Benefits and Ecosystem Services**

Strategic challenges:

- Balancing and managing different stakeholders' interests in forests managed by SFMOs
- Creating an understanding of Multiple Purpose Forestry and its benefits for various actors and stakeholder groups (including the need for simplification)

Strategic objectives:

- Building trust across key stakeholders regarding multiple purpose and sustainable forestry
- Link SFM indicators to best forest management practices and vice versa – SFMOs need proof/evidence for what they do
- Earning the “license to operate” harvesting activities
- Link UN Sustainable Development Goals to EU Forest Strategy goals and – possibly – national forest programs and strategies

Measures to be taken:

- Identify perceptions and argumentation lines of different stakeholders
- Develop – referring to stakeholder perceptions – key messages on social benefits and ecosystem services from European forests to be easily understood by all stakeholders
- Develop media campaigns (3-4) via specific and different media channels (e.g. theme days, PR-events, press releases, etc.), and include social media with a view to approach the younger generation
- Explaining the needs and benefits of classical silviculture, including harvesting, activities – especially to critical and/or non-forestry-related social groups
- Develop a tool-box of case-studies with key messages on multiple forest management
- Identify, describe and communicate the consequences of existing and potential burdens on Multiple Purpose Forestry to meet conflicting demands and societal expectations

#### **D. Biodiversity, Including Protected Area Management**

Strategic challenges:

- EU Biodiversity Strategy objectives are often misused by certain interest groups to address demands for setting aside state forests from regular management
- Ensure biodiversity conservation requirements can be met without decreasing the economic competitiveness of SFMOs
- Encompass and integrate the management objectives of protected and protective areas in an applied day-by-day sustainable forest management practice

Strategic objectives:

- Explain and communicate the role of forest management measures and tools applied by state forests, e.g. forest management plans in implementing SFM, including maintaining biodiversity
- Combine protection measures within classical sustainable forest management practice
- Demand legal interpretation (from EU and national authorities and topic-relevant decisionmakers, e.g. European Court) on N2K issues
- Increase dialogue with environmental NGOs, policy and decision makers as well as with other relevant authorities and actors, i.e. landowners' associations
- Explain and communicate the wide application in state forests of forest certification as an additional safeguard of sustainability, including forest biodiversity conservation

Measures to be taken:

- Making sure to recognize synergies among EUSTAFOR members applying a multidimensional policy approach
- Identifying key policy and decision makers (supporters and opponents) with whom to discuss EUSTAFOR's positions
- Defining "Protected Areas" and "Protected Area Management" and gaining a joint definition all over Europe.
- Achieving coherence between forest management plans and management plans for protected areas
- Developing alliances, networks and the communication of documents between relevant authorities and actors
- Creating guidance (e.g. guidelines) for managing forests in protected areas of all categories – proposed by EUSTAFOR to the European Commission
- Compensating loss of income (e.g. on the basis of contractual nature conservation)

## **V. How to Put the Strategy into Action**

Proactive participation of EUSTAFOR members is crucial in order to reach the association's strategic objectives.

EUSTAFOR engages its members and therefore introduces various initiatives: Working groups, task forces and workshops facilitate the exchange of information between members. The working groups present their results in booklets, which are used both internally and externally to communicate EUSTAFOR's findings and approaches.

EUSTAFOR participates in relevant Advisory Groups and Ad Hoc Working Groups set up by the Commission (e.g. the Civil Dialogue Group on Forestry and Cork) or other institutions, bodies and processes.

EUSTAFOR participates in the work of Forest Europe, FAO and UNECE.

EUSTAFOR actively communicates its positions and offers its members' expertise (experience and know-how) to all policymakers and stakeholders. The EUSTAFOR Communicator's Network will play a crucial role in this.

EUSTAFOR takes positions, endorsed by its Executive Committee, publishing position papers based on its members' professional competence.

EUSTAFOR proactively approaches State Forest Management Organizations throughout Europe with a view to widen its membership.

EUSTAFOR's office in Brussels ensures effective communication with all member organizations. Communication activities include maintaining a website, with duly updated news sections both on the Internet (for unlimited audience) and on the Intranet (for internal use by the members), social media (i.e. twitter), conference calls and other suitable electronic communication channels which ensure active and flexible communication. Position papers and press releases complement the association's inside-out communication. EUSTAFOR publishes an electronic "eustafor.express" newsletter for its members every second month.

A Communicators Network professionally supports EUSTAFOR'S activities and support active and lively communication between various experts from EUSTAFOR's member organizations.

EUSTAFOR's General Assembly decides on a yearly work plan for the association, which becomes a part of this Strategy.

EUSTAFOR's Strategy is revised at least every third year.