



OUR PRINCIPAL GOAL



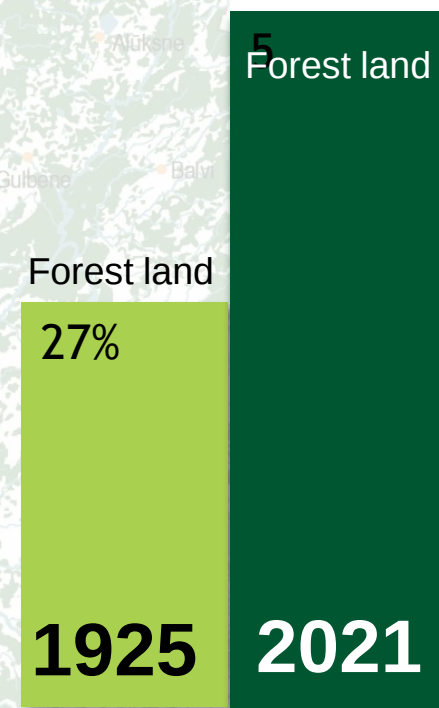
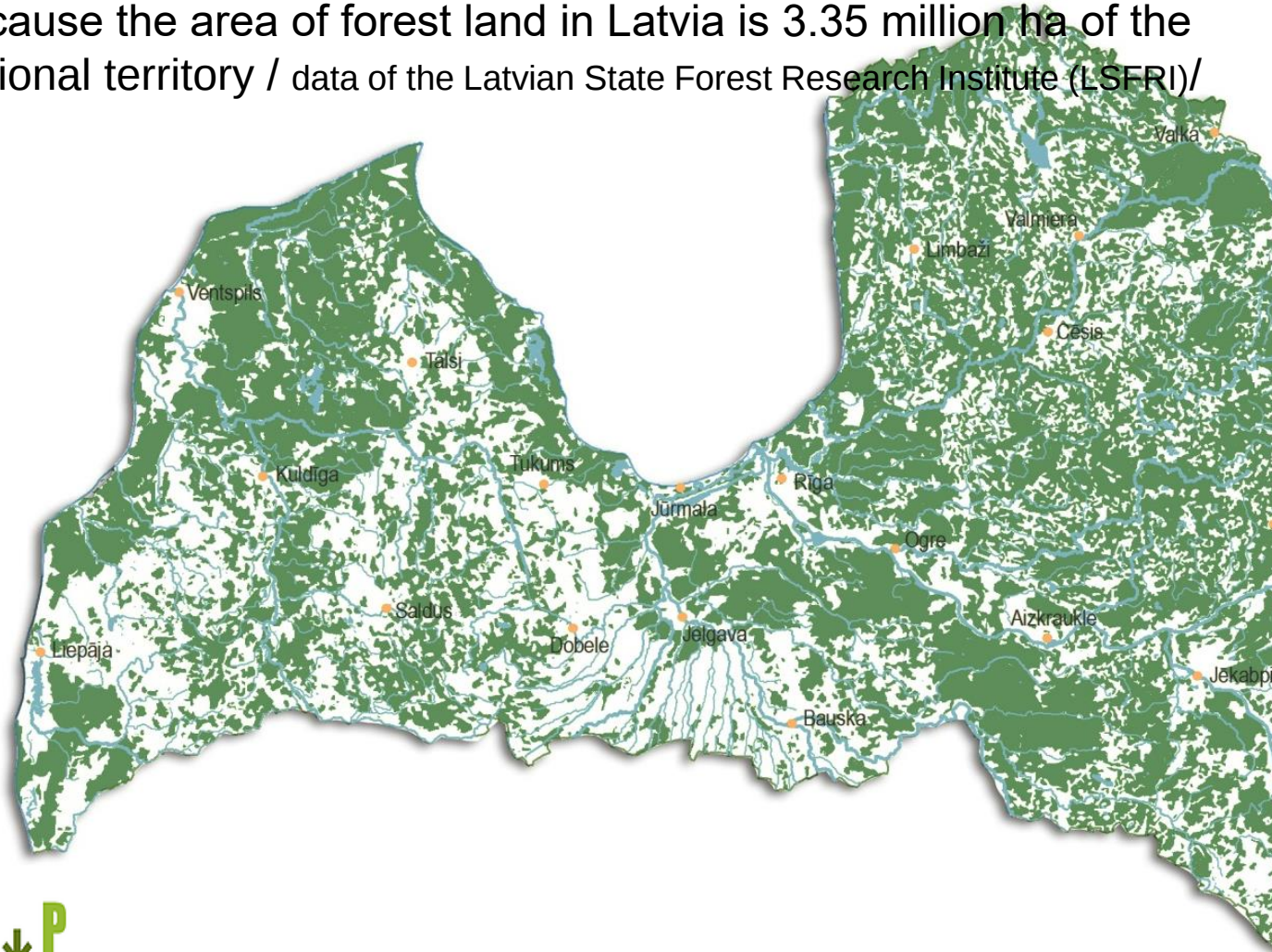
To promote responsible forest management and discussions on sustainable forestry - environmentally friendly, socially beneficial, economically sound and relevant to Latvia!

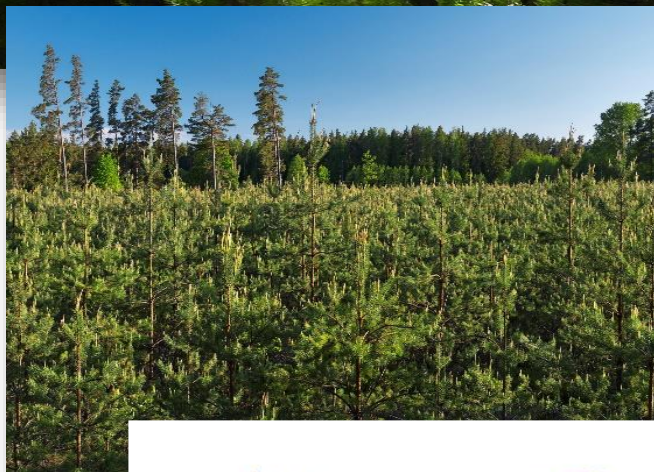
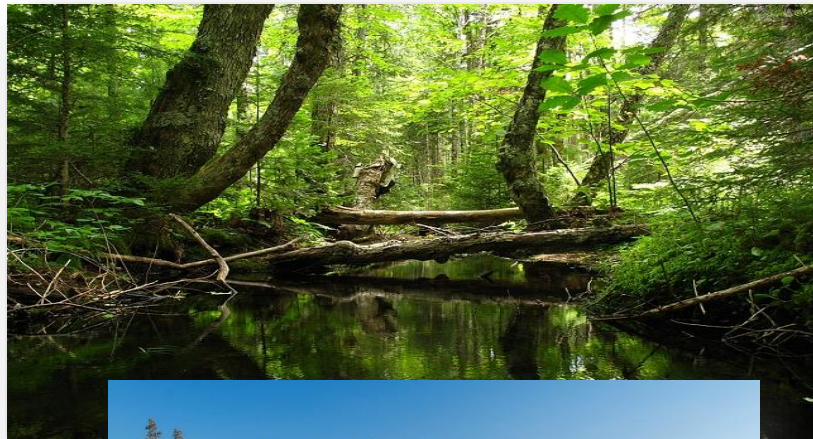
Maris Liopa, the Chairman of the Forest Certification Council of Latvia



Forests in Latvia in 2021

Latvia is one of the richest countries in Europe in terms of forests, because the area of forest land in Latvia is 3.35 million ha of the national territory / data of the Latvian State Forest Research Institute (LSFRI)/





Biological diversity

In historical terms, the intensive use of Latvia's forests for economic purposes began comparatively later than in many other European countries, and that has allowed us to preserve extensive biological diversity.

Limitations on economic activity apply to 28,2% of Latvia's forests at this time, and most of this territory is owned by the state. 683 especially protected environmental territories have been set aside to protect nature. Many are included in the unified and pan-European NATURA 2000 network of protected territories.

The forest and society

The Latvian state owns around one-half of the country's forests, while most of the rest of the forest belongs to approximately 135,000 private owners. Nearly everywhere, people are free to hike through the forest and to pick mushrooms or berries.

The number of places for recreation is increasing every year in Latvia's forests, and the territories in which recreation is one of the main goals of forest management represent 8% of all forestland in Latvia.





Challenges of the EU Green Deal:

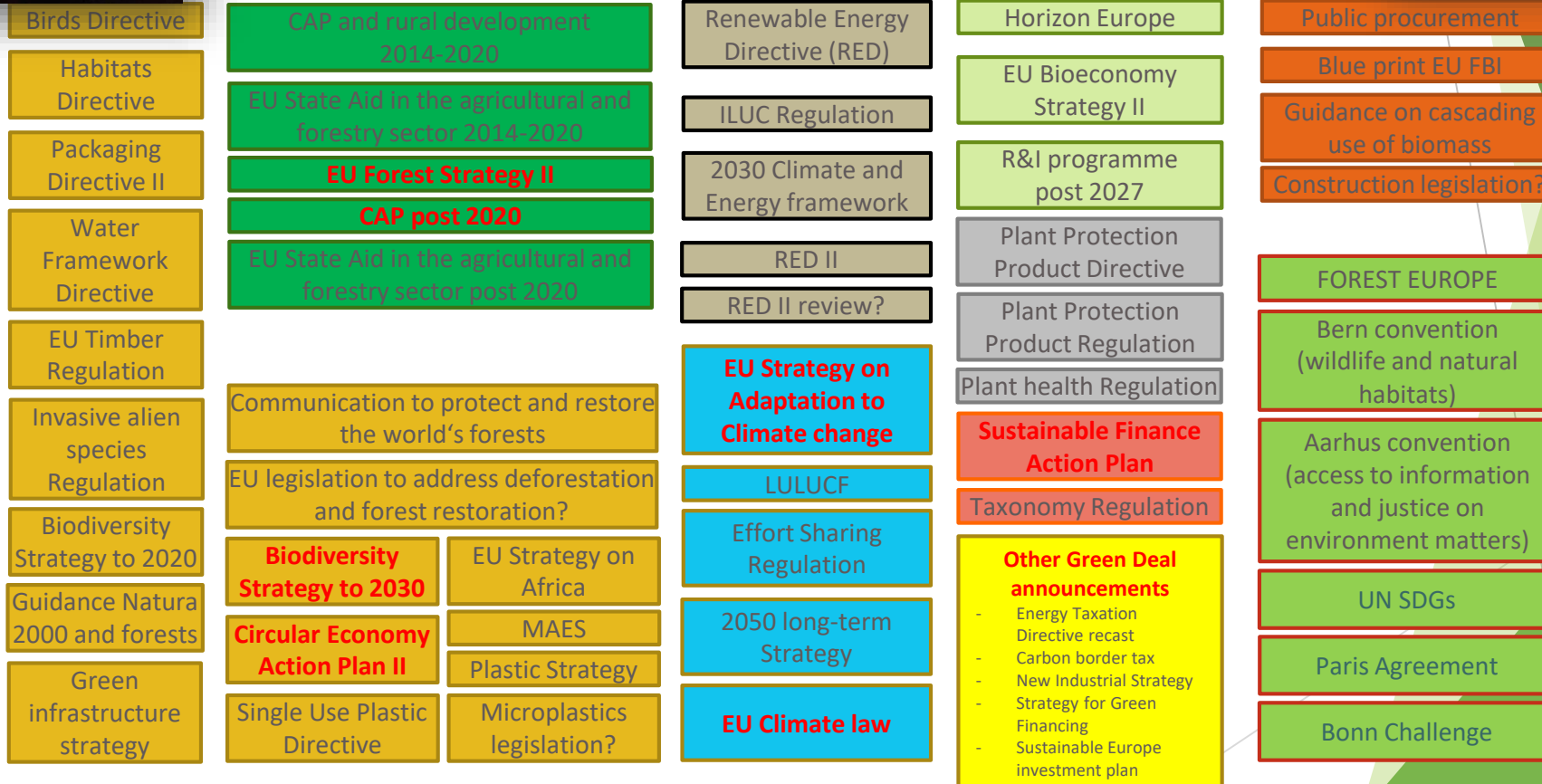
- ▶ EU Biodiversity Strategy: ***“At least 30% of the EU terrestrial and 30% of the EU marine areas should be protected, with at least one third of protected areas being strictly protected, i.e. 10% of the EU terrestrial and 10% of the EU marine areas”***
- ▶ Compliance with the requirements of the EU Taxonomy Regulation means a revision of the current procedure for calculating annual felling volumes in accordance with the requirements of 6 environmental impact objectives (GHG balance and biodiversity restrictions). **Felling volumes must not exceed the increase over a period of 30 years.** Not to modify, but to protect stored carbon areas, bogs, peatlands, wetlands ...
- ▶ **Inconsistencies and discrepancies between the requirements of the EU Taxonomy Regulation and the Renewable Energy Directive (REDII) can result in disproportionate administrative burdens.**
- ▶ **Projected impact of the EU Biodiversity Strategy on the European forest management: area of commercially used forests in 2050 - minus 31%**



«Sausages belges» from Brussels to forest sector



2020...2030...





Topicality of habitat mapping in Latvia. 2017-2021

1. Forests.

854,426 ha of the forest areas were surveyed within the project. Protected forest habitats of EU importance have been identified in 331,760 ha, which is 10% of the total area of forest lands in Latvia (excluding swamps).

The group of protected forest habitats of EU importance includes 13 types of forest habitats.

The forest areas selected for the survey covered 26% of all forest lands.

20% of the surveyed areas were located in the Specially Protected Nature Territories
80% outside SPNT.

**Most of all forest habitats of EU importance are occupied by
boreal forests - 28%!!!**

The second most common forest habitat is *Bog woodland*, which occupies 23%.

The third largest group consists of the habitat *Wooded Dunes*, occupying 18% of the identified forest habitats.

Habitat *Fennoscandian deciduous swamp woods* occupies 9%.

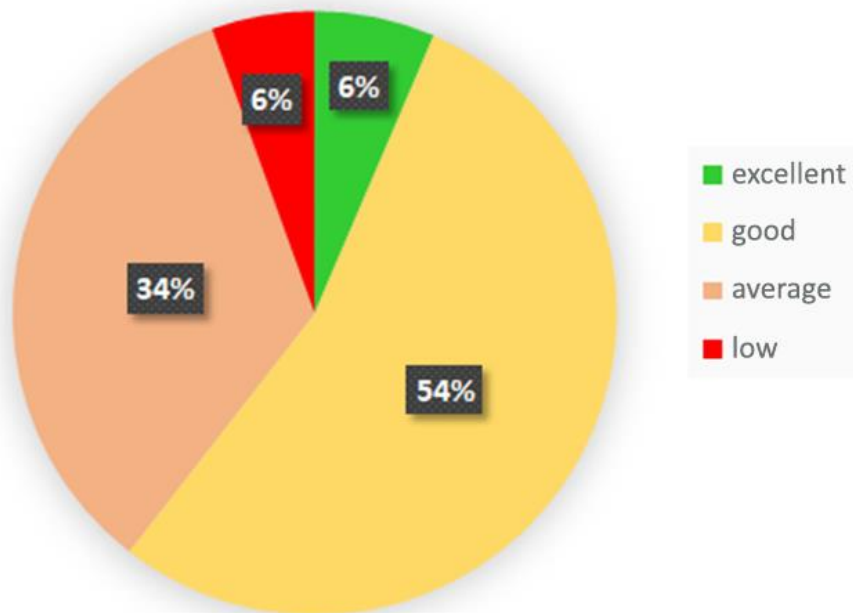
Habitat *Old broad-leaved deciduous forests* occupies 5%.

EU importance forest habitat *Fennoscandian herb-rich forests* occupies 7%.

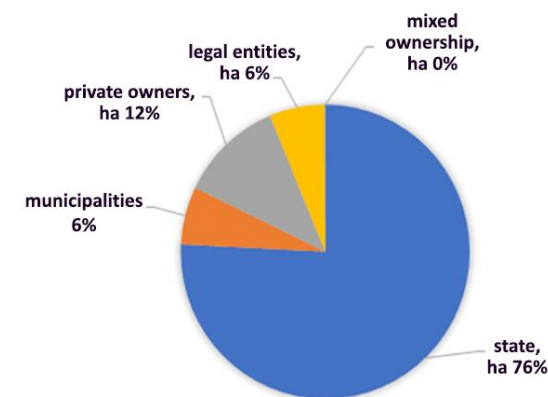




Assessment of habitats



- By summarizing the information from the available data on all forest habitats of EU importance, it can be seen that the quality assessment of habitats of **54% of the area is rated as good**.
- Unfortunately, in only 6% of cases the quality of forest habitats is rated as excellent. In 6% of cases, the quality of habitats was rated as low. **A relatively large part - 34% consists of habitats with average quality rating.** These indicators provide very little information; it is much more important to analyze the distribution of quality in specific forest habitat types.
- Also, the quality control of mapping on site shows that there are situations when an excellent habitat is rated as good, because excellent quality is sometimes equated with the ideal condition of the habitat, which can be very rare in nature.



Impact of “felling” moratorium

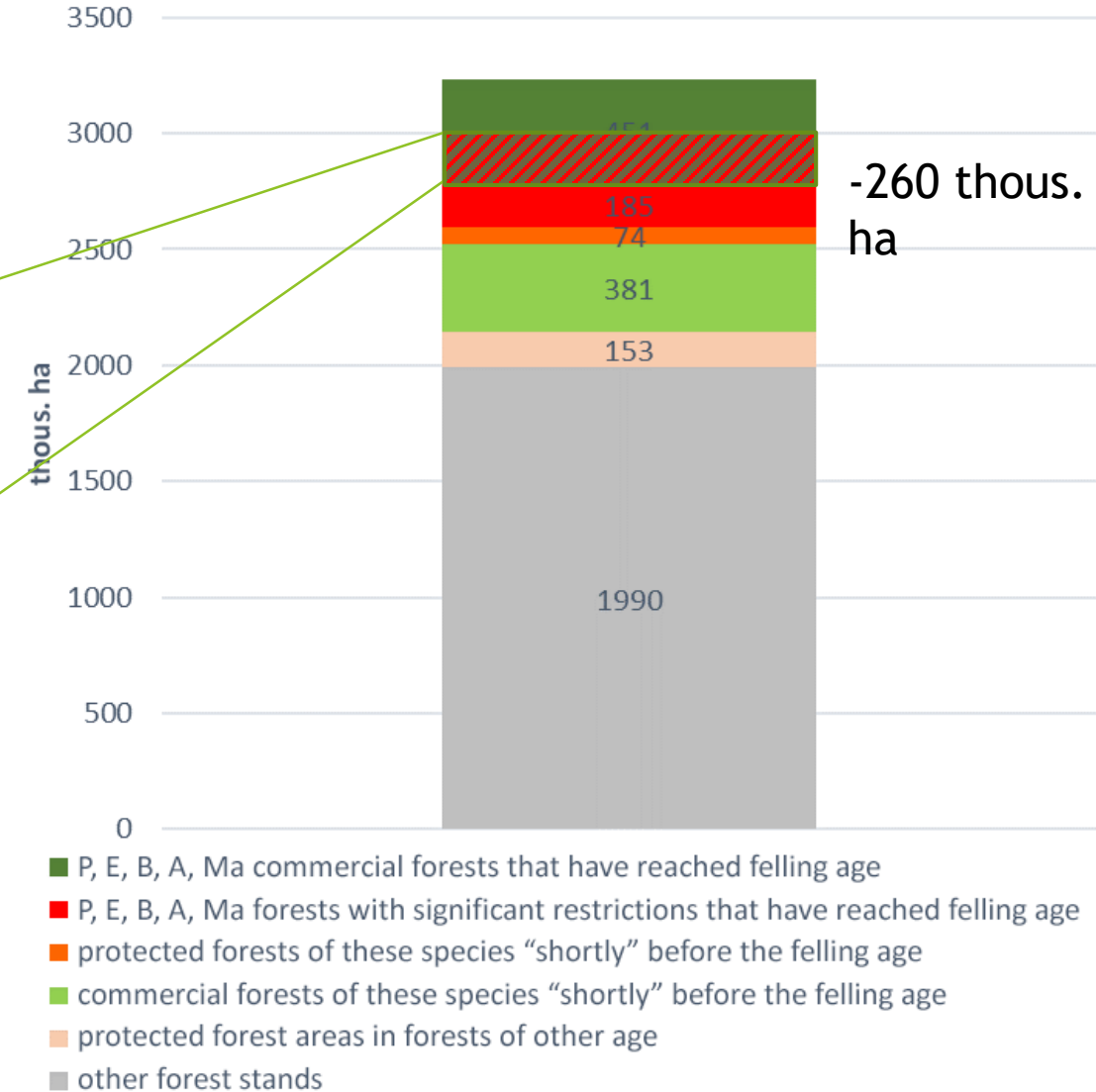


Ministry of Environmental
Protection and Regional
Development

ES BDS 2030

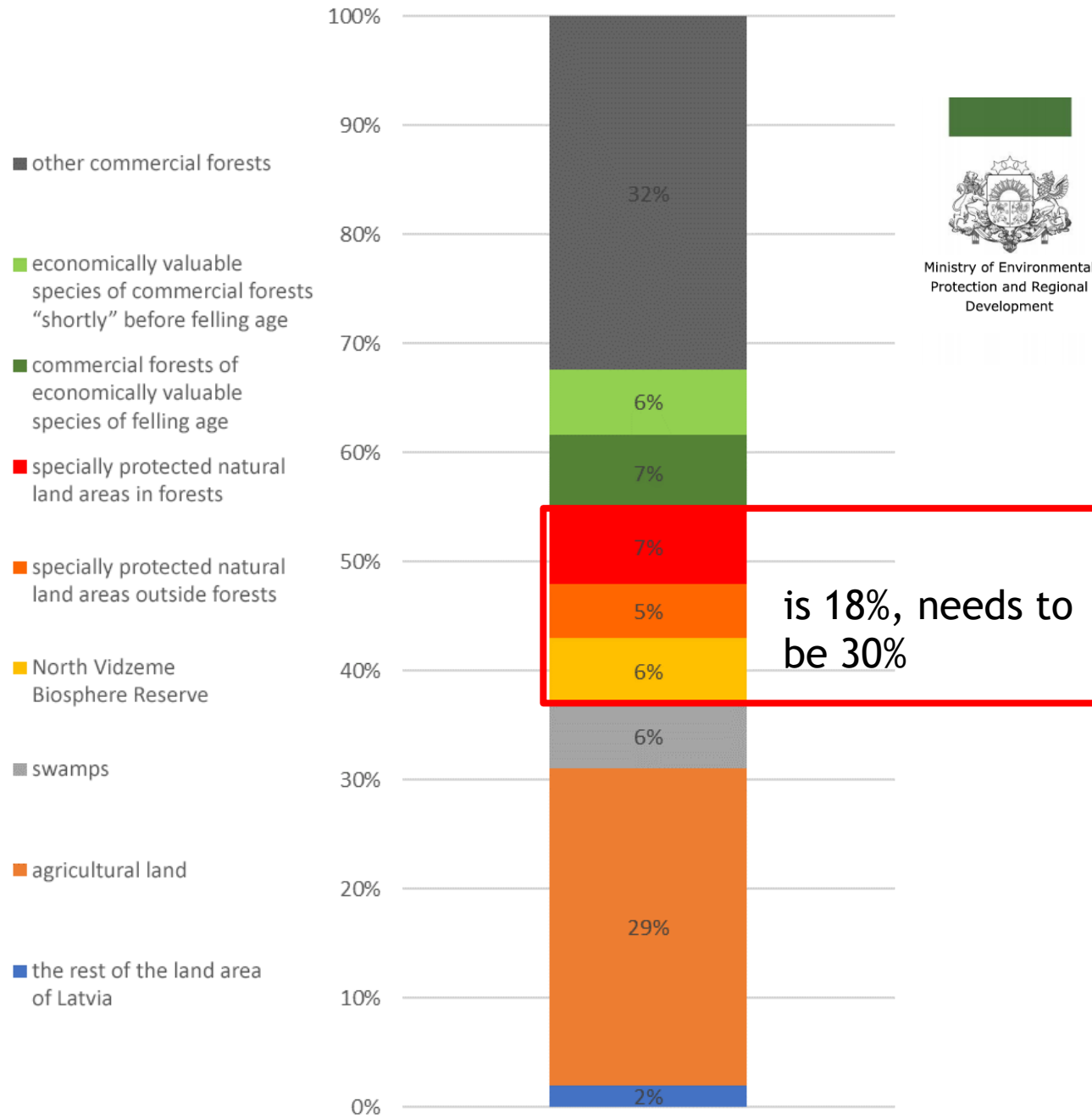
- Include in the integrated Network of European Protected Areas primarily the areas where areas important for the conservation of several natural values overlap
- Not to plan and carry out any economic activity in the habitat areas of EU importance until the completion and improvement of the Natura 2000 Protected Areas Network and submission of proposals for a unified Network of European Protected Areas

Forest land use in 2020



Biodiversity Strategy

How to implement a biodiversity strategy?



ES BDS 2030

1. Protect nature - increase the coverage of EU_protected_areas on land and at sea to 30%, including plan for strict protection of 10% of areas, improve their management;

In terms of priorities for the designation of national protected areas, Member States should start by identifying and designating areas which, while they are not and will not need to be included in Natura 2000, are important to increase the coherence of the Natura 2000 network and improve the connectivity among Natura 2000 sites.

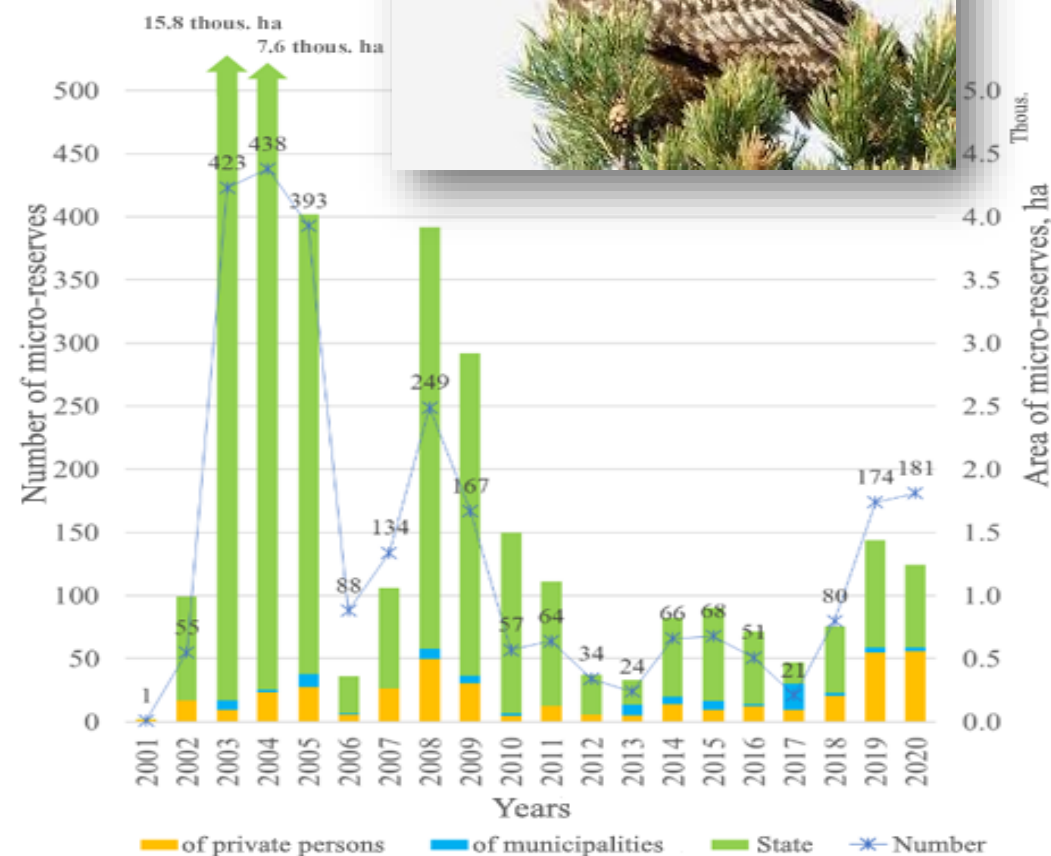
Secondly, Member States should identify species and habitats that require the establishment of additional protected areas. These should include, as described above, species and habitats covered by the EU nature legislation as well as those included in European red lists. The identification of areas to be put under legal protection should be done using the most relevant criteria, among those described above, for the species and habitats that require protection.

Finally, Member States should identify additional species and habitats which are included in national or regional red lists and use a similar process to the one described above for the identification of the most relevant areas for those species and habitats which are not yet under legal protection.



So far, the Forest Service has established 2,768 micro-reserves in force on forest lands with a total geospatial area of 46.3 thousand ha. 89% of the areas of micro-reserves are located in state forests, 2% - in municipal forests and 9% - in private forests. In terms of the number and area of micro-reserves, the largest number of micro-reserves has been established for birds, accounting for 88% of the total area of micro-reserves and 64% of the number of micro-reserves. The largest areas of micro-reserves have been designated for the protection of capercaillie (47%), little eagle (15%), black stork (13%) and white-tailed eagle (5%).

In 2020, the Service established 181 micro-reserves with a total geospatial area of 1246 ha in forest lands, of which 53% were established in state forests, 2% - in municipal forests and 45% - in privately owned forests. The largest number of micro-reserves has been established for specially protected birds: 158 micro-reserves for the little eagle, 8 for the black stork. The experts of the Nature Protection Board propose to establish reserves.



Hypothetical “Existence of Threats” to biodiversity in Latvia

- ▶ The Nature and Environment section of the National Development Plan for 2027 identified the existence of threats to biodiversity in Latvia as a problem.
- ▶ Question that needs to be answered: *What values indicate that biodiversity is decreasing?*
- ▶ The representatives of the Ministry of Environment and heads of environmental organizations at the meetings point out that biodiversity in Latvia is decreasing, also based on the reports of 2012 and 2019 to the European Commission, as well as by mentioning data of AS Latvijas valsts meži on the state of biodiversity.
- ▶ Is it really true?





Regarding report of Latvia to the European Commission on the assessment of protected forest habitats of EU importance

- ▶ The quality of the report is generally questionable and can be considered biased because:
- ▶ the report on all forest habitats states: *“there is no comprehensive habitat mapping in Latvia, and it should be taken into account that if such total mapping of habitats was carried out, the distribution maps would most likely differ”* (quote from the report).
- ▶ Habitat quality assessment reports emphasize that there is no recurrence of habitat monitoring, so changes over time are unknown.
- ▶ For example, for the area of the habitat “Fennoscandian deciduous swamp woods”: 2.4.1 *“The areas indicated in the previous report (225 km²) have been retained due to the lack of a relatively more comprehensive mapping or otherwise improved data that would allow a more accurate estimate of the amount of habitat in the country”* (quote).
- ▶ Despite the lack of information, the report concludes as follows: *“2.4.5 Short-term trend - decrease”* (area of the habitat decreases).
- ▶ A typical conclusion for almost all forest habitats
- ▶ Old broad-leaved deciduous forests: *“There are currently no direct data on changes in habitat areas due to the lack of comprehensive mapping and monitoring. However, habitat areas are likely to decrease by at least 1% each year. The rating is underestimated rather than exaggerated”* (quote from the report).



Application of “Method Statement”

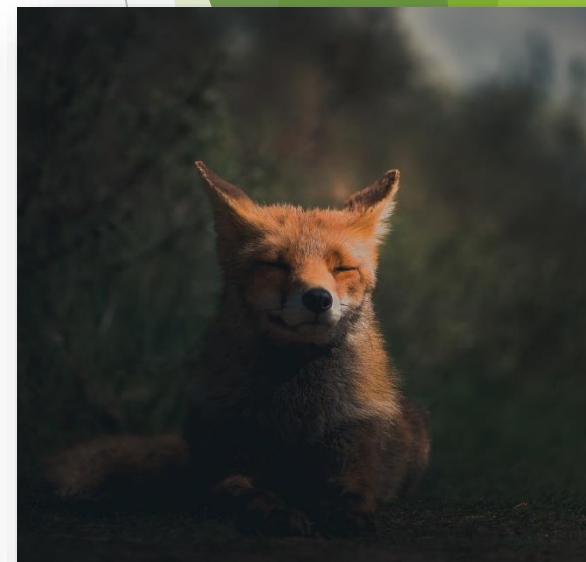


- ▶ According to the report, for almost all forest habitats:
- ▶ *“More than 25% of the area is unfavorable for the specific structures and functions of the habitat (including typical species)”* (quotation);
- ▶ A state-funded habitat monitoring in Latvia has been performed only in Natura2000, where economic activity does not take place at all or is limited, which allows concluding that low-quality habitats are included in protected areas, or the existing nature protection system is inefficient, as the quality of all habitats has reduced since the previous reporting period;
- ▶ It is not clear on what specific data the statement about the rest of the territory of Latvia is based (*“outside protected areas the quality of habitats is even worse”* (quotation), and how exactly the overall assessment of the condition of a particular habitat in the entire country is obtained.
- ▶ Taking into account all the above, it can be concluded that by analyzing the available data, the report on Latvia provides the European Commission with an **indicative** assessment and opinion of **some experts on the condition of specific EU importance forest habitats in the country**; the assessment is not based on comprehensive habitat mapping and quality assessment on site.



Conclusions on the report - the same situation as in 2019...

- ▶ **The report is not prepared independently and “transparently”:**
 - ▶ the preparation process is not transparent, and information on its “technical side” is not available;
 - ▶ the N2000 monitoring methodology, the monitoring itself and also the national report of Latvia have been prepared by the specialists of one team (the Latvian Fund for Nature);
 - ▶ there is no opportunity in the process to find out whether the method was adapted to the result.
- ▶ Thus, taking into account the statement of the MEPRD representative and also the WWF representative about the “threats to biological diversity in Latvia”, the forest sector has the following questions about the forthcoming report to the EC this year:
 - ▶ Executors?
 - ▶ Used methodology and selected experts?
 - ▶ Conflict of interest of experts, possible interest in a specific result?
 - ▶ Public discussion of the LV report?





On life of birds

(The forest sector is often blamed as destroyers of bird habitats...)

► Small eagle

Based on the monitoring records made in 2018, the number of couples present in the four plots was unchanged, while the number increased significantly in the plot “Murmastiene” - from 15 couples in 2017 to 21 couple in 2018.

Taking into account the stabilization of the number of couples present, the long-term, medium-term and short-term dynamics of the species in Latvia is stable.

► Osprey

Summarizing the data for the three years (2016-2018), it has been established that the population size has increased by 5%, and **currently 220-240 couples nest in Latvia**. The analysis of data over the last 30 years shows that the population has increased almost fivefold.

► White-tailed eagle

The population in Latvia continues growing, which is in line with the trend of the last 20 years. The most rapid growth is observed in the last 10 years, which is characterized by the largest number of inhabited nests - 69 in 2018. Of the 89 nests surveyed by LSF, 16 were registered as new.





Biodiversity in Latvia and the opinion of FCCL

Within the context of the EU Biodiversity Strategy

- ▶ By emphasizing the need to take care of natural values, our goal is not to allow reducing the areas of land planned for commercial forestry and agricultural activity, but to base our opinion on the real situation and scientifically based indicators.
- ▶ As the statement that there is a “threat to biological diversity” in Latvia potentially encourages the creation of restrictions on economic activity, it may create extremely serious, negative socio-economic consequences for the development of our country in future.
- ▶ **Biodiversity in Latvia is changing, not declining.**
- ▶ **Protecting biodiversity may require constant, objective monitoring of values.**
- ▶ The area of commercial forests in Latvia must not decrease. If, so called mapping reveals new “values”, it means that the existing protected areas must be reduced by a given area.
- ▶ It is mandatory to implement the application procedure of appropriate compensations being paid to the owners, whose land and forest areas are encumbered for the needs of nature protection - **the current situation in this matter is absolutely unacceptable and violates Section 105 of the Satversme (Constitution of Latvia).**



The Forest Certification Council of Latvia calls for amending the standard on the procedure for establishment and management of micro-reserves, their protection, as well as determination of micro-reserves and their buffer zones, as its current wording unreasonably violates the rights of owners of the land planned for construction in the municipal spatial plans without built infrastructure, and the establishment of a micro-reserve on such land would in many cases mean that it is not possible to expand the farms.

The Forest Certification Council of Latvia considers that micro-reserves cannot be established in places for which tree felling permits have already been issued.

«Each Member State shall perform its part of the work, whose volume is determined based on objective ecological criteria and by recognizing that quantity and quality of biodiversity differs in each country» - quote from EU Biodiversity Strategy



Currently in Latvia

(according to National forest monitoring)



In terms of the volume of dead wood per hectare of forest, Latvia is in the third place in the entire European Union. “...France and Slovakia have larger volume of dead wood than Latvia, managing to “beat” our country in this parameter only due to the fact that after the devastation caused by the great storms in Europe, it agreed with the request made by the environmental activists that storm-damaged wood should be left in protected areas to rot, as a result of which it later turned out for Slovakia to be a fight against the proliferation of bark beetles...”

Latvia has 65 million kbm of dead wood of various species, in 10 years + 7.5 million kbm - 12%.

1% of the total forest area is felled in Latvia every year for subsequent planting
The area of young stands has increased from 343 to 362,000 ha since 2012.



Excessive restrictions on economic activity reduce the value of forest property and the economic efficiency of economic activity!





Thank you!

