



Ex-post Evaluation of the EU Forest Action Plan

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EX-POST EVALUATION OF THE EU FOREST ACTION PLAN

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Action	Refers to the 18 Key Actions of EU Forest Action Plan (FAP) indicated in COM(2006) 302 final, 15.6.2006.
Action Plan	The EU Forest Action Plan COM(2006) 302 final, 15.6.2006.
Activity	<p>Refers to the 55 activities identified in the EU FAP Work Programme (2007-2011) and any additional activities carried out by the Member States.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>Additional activity</i>: refers to any additional activity of the Member States carried out in the context of the EU FAP in addition to the activities listed in the Work Programme 2007-2011.- <i>Parallel activity</i>: refers to any activity takes place in parallel to EU FAP.
Coherence	The extent to which the intervention does not contradict other interventions with similar objectives.
Effectiveness	The extent to which the EU FAP objectives and intended results are achieved / are expected to be achieved.
Efficiency	The extent to which outputs and/or the desired effects are achieved with the lowest possible use of resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, administrative costs, etc.)
Forests	Forests are lands of more than 0.5 hectares, with a tree canopy cover of more than 10 percent, which are not primarily under agricultural or urban land use.
Forest sector	<p>Forest sector includes the following <i>Nomenclature statistique des Activités économiques dans la Communauté Européenne</i> (NACE) categories 02, 20, 21:</p> <p>Section A: Agriculture, hunting and forestry: <i>Division 02</i>: Forestry and logging.</p> <p>Section D: Manufacturing: <i>Division 16</i>: Manufacture of wood and of products of wood and cork, except furniture. <i>Group 16.1</i>: Sawmilling and planing of wood <i>Group 16.2</i>: <i>Manufacture of products of wood, cork, straw and plaiting materials.</i></p> <p><i>Division 17</i>: Manufacture of paper and paper products: <i>Group 17.1</i>: Manufacture of pulp, paper and paperboard. <i>Group 17.2</i>: Manufacture of articles of paper and paperboard.</p> <p>These divisions do not include the manufacture of furniture whether fitted or free-standing (<i>Division 31</i>), the manufacture of wooden toys, brushes and brooms or coffins (part of other manufacturing, <i>Division 32</i>) or the installation of wooden fittings and the like (part of specialised construction activities, <i>Division 43</i>).</p>
Forest-based Industries	The EU forest-based and related industries comprise the following industrial sectors: woodworking (excluding wooden furniture), cork and other forest-based materials; pulp, paper and board manufacturing; paper and board converting; and printing.

Forestry (sector)	Forestry is included in the NACE Section A, Division 02 (see “forest sector” above), Group 02.01-02.04. <i>Division 02: Forestry and logging.</i> <i>Group 02.01: Silviculture and other forestry activities</i> <i>Group 02.02: Logging</i> <i>Group 02.03: Gathering of wild non-wood products</i> <i>Group 02.04: Support services to forestry</i>
Impacts	Final outcomes achieved by the EU FAP (e.g. lasting effects of policy measures in the EU FAP). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Expected impacts:</i> Expected impacts are derived from the Actions of the EU FAP general objectives: competitiveness, environment, quality of life and coordination, coherence and communication.
Intervention logic	The logic by which measures will lead, and contribute, to the EU FAP objectives.
Leading Actor	Refers to the bodies responsible for implementing the EU FAP. The Leading Actor is the responsible actor (e.g. the Commission, the Standing Forestry Committee and/or the Member States) for an EU FAP activity as defined in the EU FAP work programme (2007-2011).
Outputs (products)	Direct products and/or services that were generated through the activities of implementing the EU FAP.
Other Wooded Land (OWL)	Other Wooded Land is land with a canopy cover of 5-10 percent of trees able to reach a height of 5 m in situ; or a canopy cover of more than 10 percent when smaller trees, shrubs and bushes are included.
Relevance	The extent to which the EU FAP objectives are consistent with stakeholders’ requirements, Member States’ needs, global priorities and the Community policies.
Results (outcomes)	Effects and outcomes attributable to the EU FAP outputs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Expected results (outcomes):</i> Expected results are derived from the EU FAP specific objectives that were defined by the Key Actions.
Side-effects	Unintentional effects caused through the implementation of the EU FAP.
Stakeholders	Individuals and organisations that are directly (or indirectly) affected by the implementation and results of the EU FAP. In the Ex-Post Evaluation, the target group “stakeholders” primarily refers to the members of the Advisory Group on Forestry and Cork, including other stakeholders targeted by the Mid-Term Evaluation survey.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC-FBI	Advisory Committee on Community Policy regarding Forestry and Forest-based Industries coordination
AGFC	Advisory Group on Forestry and Cork
BACCARA	Biodiversity And Climate Change, a Risk Analysis
BISE	Biodiversity Information System for Europe
C&I	pan-European Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management (MCPFE)
CAP	Common Agriculture Policy
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEE	Central-Eastern Europe
CEI-Bois	European Confederation of Woodworking Industries
CEPF	Confederation of European Forest Owners
CEPI	Confederation of European Paper Industries
CIRCA	Communication & Information Resource Centre Administrator
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CMP7	7 th Session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties
COFO	FAO Committee on Forestry
COM	European Commission
COP	Conference of Parties (UNFCCC)
COP17	17 th Conference of the Parties
COST	European Cooperation in Science and Technology
CPF	Collaborative Partnership on Forests
CSF	Common Strategic Framework
DG	Directorate General (Commission departments and services):
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
ECCP	European Climate Change Programme
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
EEA	European Environmental Agency
EFDAC	European Forest Data Centre
EFFIS	European Forest Fire Information System
EFI	European Forest Institute
EFICP	European Forest Information and Communication Platform
EFMS	European Forest Monitoring System
EFSOS	European Forest Sector Outlook Studies
Eionet	European environment information and observation network
EIP	European Innovation Partnerships (ref. Horizon 2020)
ELO	European Landowners' Organisation
ENA-FLEGT	FLEGT Action Plan and the St. Petersburg Ministerial Declaration
ENRD	European Network for Rural Development
ENRTP	Environment and Natural Resource Thematic Programme

EP	European Parliament
EPPO	European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization
EQ	Evaluation Question
ERA	European Research Area
ERA-NET	European Research Area Net
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ETP	European Technology Platforms
EU	European Union
EU ETS	EU Emission Trading Scheme
EU FAP	EU Forest Action Plan
EU27	All 27 EU Member States
EUROFORENET	European Network of Forest Energy
EUROFOREX	European forest externalities
EUwood	Real potential for changes in growth and use of EU forests study
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
F-BI	Forest-based Industries
FCN	Forest Communicators' Network (UNECE/FAO team of specialists)
FE	FOREST EUROPE (previously referred as MCPFE, Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe)
FLEGT	Forest Law Enforcement, Governance (and Trade)
FORSYS	Forest Management Decision Support Systems
FORVALUE	Study on the Development and Marketing of Non-Market Forest Products and Services
FP	EU's Framework Programme for research (e.g. FP6 / FP7)
FS	EU Forestry Strategy
FTP	Forest-based sector Technology Platform
FUTMON	Forest monitoring for the future
GHG	Greenhouse gas
GPP	Green Public Procurement
IEE	Intelligent Energy Europe
IEEAF	Integrated environmental and economic accounting for forests
IFF	Intergovernmental Forum of Forests
INC	Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPF	Intergovernmental Panel of Forests
ISEFOR	Increasing Sustainability of European Forests: Modelling for Security against invasive pests and pathogens under climate change
ISG	Inter-services' Group (Commission internal body)
ISGF	Inter-services' Group on Forests
ITTA	International Tropical Timber Agreement
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organization
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IUFRO	International Union of Forest Research Organizations

IYB	International Year of Biodiversity
IYF	International Year of Forests
JRC	Joint Research Centre
KA	Key Action of the EU FAP
KBBE	Knowledge Based Bio-Economy (FP7)
LBA	Legally Binding Agreement
LIFE+	Financial Instrument for the Environment
LULUCF	Land use, land-use change and forestry (UNFCCC)
MCPFE	Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (Forest Europe)
MOTIVE	Models for adaptive forest management
MS	EU Member State
NEWFOREX	New Ways to Value and Market Forest Externalities project
NFP	National Forest Programme
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NRA	National Research Agendas
NREAP	National Renewable Energy Action Plan
NWFGS	Non-wood forest goods and services
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OMC	Open Method of Coordination
OWL	Other Wooded Land
PAWSMED	PAWS (Pedagogic Work in the Forest - A Seminar Concept for Foresters) project especially directed towards the Mediterranean countries
PFO	Private forest ownership
R&D	Research and Development
RDP	Rural Development Programme
REDD	Reduced Emissions from Deforestation
RES	Renewable Energy Sources
Rio+20	United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 2012
RTD	Research and Technological Development
SCAR	Standing Committee on Agricultural Research
SEBI	Streamlining European Biodiversity Indicators
SEIS	Shared Environmental Information System
SFC	Standing Forestry Committee
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SRA	Strategic Research Agenda
Star-COLIBRI	Strategic Research Targets for 2020 – Collaboration Initiative on Biorefineries
STReESS	Studying Tree Responses to extreme Events: a SynthesiS
TEEB	The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity
UN	United Nations
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission to Europe
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFF	United Nations Forum on Forests
USEWOOD	Improving Data and Information on the Potential Supply of Wood Resources: A European Approach from Multisource National Forest Inventories
VPA	Voluntary Partnership Agreement
WG	Working Group
WoodWisdom- NET	The first ERA-NET on wood material science and engineering
WPF	Council Working Party on Forestry
WTO	World Trade Organization
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

1 Introduction

The Council Resolution on a forestry strategy for the European Union was adopted in 1998. It established a framework for forest-related actions in support of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) based on the coordination of the forest policies of the Member States and Community policies as well as initiatives relevant to forests and forestry.

The Strategy emphasises SFM as defined by FOREST EUROPE with the multifunctional role of forests as overarching principles for action. The Strategy states that forest policy is a competence of the Member States (based on the principle of subsidiarity and the concept of shared responsibility), but that the EU can contribute to the implementation of SFM through common policies. It also emphasises the implementation of international commitments, principles and recommendations through national and/or sub-national forest programmes or equivalent instruments, as well as active participation in all forest-related international processes. Moreover, it stressed the need to improve coordination, communication and cooperation in all policy areas that are of relevance to the forest sector.

Implementation of the forestry strategy was reported by the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament in 2005. The consequent Council Conclusions invited the Commission, in close cooperation with the Member States and in consultation with stakeholders, to elaborate a proposal for an Action Plan. The Council recognised the need for greater coherence of forest-related policies “...the EU Forestry Strategy needs to be updated as a basis for the EU Forest Action Plan to take a proactive approach allowing the forest sector to enhance its competitiveness and economic viability, and to address the growing needs and expectations of society and the challenges of globalisation” (2662nd Council meeting).

In response to the Council request, the EU Forest Action Plan (EU FAP) was put forward and adopted in 2006 by the Commission. It is based on the principles and elements identified in the Forestry Strategy for the EU, and it covers four objectives, namely to:

- (1) **Improve the long-term competitiveness,**
- (2) **Improve and protect the environment,**
- (3) **Contribute to the quality of life,** and
- (4) **Foster coordination and communication** between Community actions, as well as, between Community actions and the forest policies of the Member States.

The Action Plan provides a framework for the implementation of forest-related actions at Community and Member State level, and it serves as an instrument for coordination between different Community actions as well as between Community actions and forest policies of the Member States. The aim was to support and enhance SFM and the multifunctional role of forests. The Leading Actors responsible for implementing the plan in 2007-2011 were consequently the Commission and the Member States.

As part of its implementation plan, the EU FAP was assessed in 2008¹. The mid-term evaluation report broadly concluded that the EU FAP had been put into practice as the prioritisations of the work programme had been made, and that the Action was on track. However, it was also noted that the effects of the EU FAP on its specific goals (the four objectives above) cannot be expected to show up after only two years of implementation. After an approximately five-year running period, the ex-post evaluation of the Action Plan has now been carried out.

¹<http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/eval/reports/euforest/>

The objectives of the ex-post evaluation of the EU Forest Action Plan were to:

- Build on the mid-term evaluation and provide a review of the implementation, effectiveness and appropriateness of the EU FAP.
- Analyse whether the objectives of the EU FAP have been met, the Action Plan has led to any side effects, the instruments used are appropriate, relevant, effective and efficient and what the role of the key actors was.
- Examine if the EU FAP was the most suitable framework for forest-related actions and instruments of coordination between the Community and Member States.

This was carried out in the light of key developments for the forest sectors in the Member States, and at European and international levels.

This report presents the results of the mid-term evaluation carried out by an external evaluation team during November 2011 – March 2012. The evaluation has been guided by a Steering Group consisting of representatives from the Commission Services involved in the implementation of the EU FAP and led by the DG Agriculture and Rural Development Evaluation unit.

The report is structured into an introduction, a method and analysis section, and conclusions as follows: **Chapter 2** briefly explains the state-of-the-play and developments with respect to forests and forestry in the EU, including relevant policies at EU, Member State and international levels, and the implementation of the EU FAP in 2007-2011. **Chapter 3** explains the methodology used, as well as the data and information collected during the exercise. **Chapter 4** presents answers to the five Evaluation Questions (EQs), three EQs about implementation of the Action (e.g. effectiveness and efficiency, improvement of coherence and cross-sectoral cooperation, and the balancing of economic, environmental and socio-cultural objectives related to forestry) and two EQs about the relevance of the Action (e.g. added value in implementing the EU Forestry Strategy, and; relevance of EU FAP objectives, key actions and activities, as well as adequacy of its organisational set-up). Each EQ response begins with a brief introduction, and in the end there is a summary of lessons learnt during implementation. The lessons learnt are based on the evaluation survey responses and are complemented with open questions as food for thought. **Chapter 5** concludes the analysis of the evaluation themes and provide final recommendations for the EU FAP.

2 EU Forests and forestry – variety of landscapes of Europe and policy making

2.1 Structure of the EU forest sector

The objective of the following section is to provide a brief overview of the level of diversity in forests and forest-based activities in Europe, as well as some of the environmental and socio-economic benefits that forests generate in Europe.

2.1.1 Forests in the EU

Forests provide a multitude of services, such as clean air and water, as well as stabilise soils and help prevent flooding. They absorb billions of tons of carbon that help tackle climate change and provide safe homes for a vast range of species across the globe.

The global forest area was estimated to be around 4 billion hectares (ha) in 2010. The focus of the ex-post evaluation is on the European Union (EU27) that has a forest and other wooded land (OWL) cover of around 177 million ha. This roughly corresponds to 42.3% of the total land area in EU27 (FAO, 2010). But, as noted in Figure 1, the forest area is not equally distributed across the EU27 and the percentage of forest cover varies significantly across Europe. Even more, OWL represents a relatively small part of the total land area, except for in Southern European countries, where it corresponds to 11.9% in South-East Europe and 13% in South-West Europe with regard to the total forest area (see Table 1).

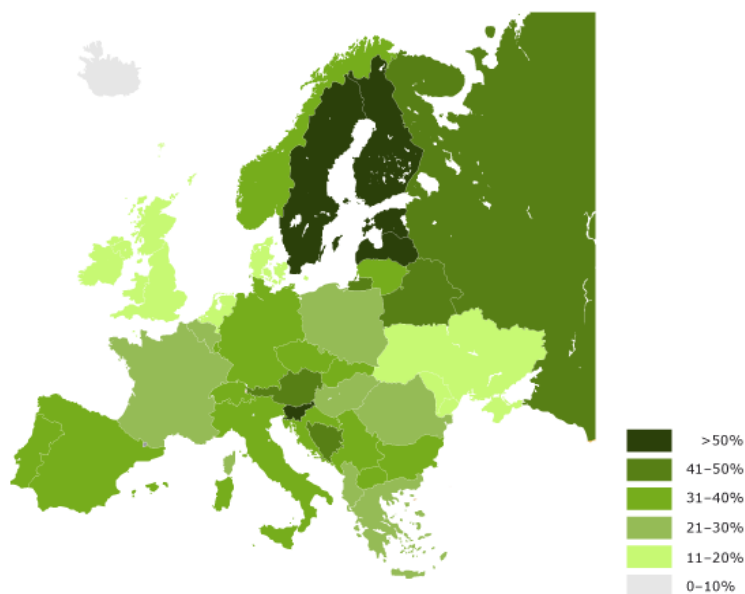


Figure 1. The share of Forest area of total land area in Europe in 2010.

(Source: FAO).

In 2010, the European countries with the highest coverage of forests and OWL were Finland (23 million ha, or 77% of its land area), Sweden (31 million ha, 76%), Spain (28 million ha, 55%), Italy (11 million ha, 37%), France (18 million ha, 32%) and Germany (11 million ha, 32%). Together these six Member States accounted for more than two-thirds of the total forest area in EU27. The lowest coverage of forests and other wooded land can be found in Malta (1%), Ireland (12%), the Netherlands (11%) and the United Kingdom (12%).

Table 1. Forest area and OWL, 2010.

Region	Forest		Available for wood supply		Other wooded land (OWL)		Total land area
	1 000 ha	% of land area	1 000 ha	% of land area	1 000 ha	% of land area	1 000 ha
<i>North Europe</i>	69 278	52.1	54 478	41.0	5 651	4.3	132 869
<i>Central-West Europe</i>	36 882	26.4	34 382	24.6	1 923	1.4	139 962
<i>Central-East Europe</i>	43 959	26.8	33 925	20.7	848	0.5	164 051
<i>South-West Europe</i>	30 795	34.8	24 839	28,1	11 496	13.0	88 475
<i>South-East Europe</i>	29 936	23.1	21 316	16.4	15 427	11.9	129 778
<i>EU-27</i>	157 194	37.6	133 262	31.8	19 810	4.7	418 613

(Source: Forest Europe, 2011)²

In total, the growing stock of wood within the EU has been expanding, indicating that average harvest levels do not exceed the annual increment. Since 1990 the forest area within the EU Member States has increased annually by about 0.50%. The growth was found to slow down slightly towards the year 2005 (reaching 0.46%), with growth decreasing the most in Spain, France and Italy (FAO, 2006). Between 1990 and 2000 the growing wood stock in the EU increased by around 270 million cubic meters over bark per annum. Between 2000 and 2005, wood stock per hectare was found to increase by 1.2 cubic meters over bark within the EU annually. For 21 European countries in the private forest ownership (PFO) database (UNECE, 2010b) the growing stock in privately owned forests reached 50% of the total stock on 58% of the total forest area (see Table 2). The share of European forests available for wood supply in 2010 was noted to be the same as that in 2005 in the State of Europe's Forests 2011 report.

It is expected that forest resources will continue to increase, although the process is slowing down (FAO, 2009). This is partly due to a growing number of issues having an impact on the forest sector and forests available for wood supply in Europe (and globally), such as increased demand for forest fuels in Europe. Forest resources in Europe are however still expected to continue to expand in view of declining land dependence (e.g. lower dependence on forests as source for subsistence), increasing income, and concerns for protection of the environment, and a growing concern for protecting the environment. Other key policy developments, such as climate change and renewable energy, have contributed to making forests more visible on the global political agenda during EU FAP implementation (2007-2011). At the same time, forest fires in Greece (in 2007 and 2009), Spain and Portugal (in 2009), as well as in the Russian Federation (in 2010) brought forests back into public attention in Europe. Also storms, such as Storm Gudrun (Denmark and Sweden in 2005) and Storm Klaus (France, Spain and Italy in 2009) not only caused widespread damages to forests, but also affected the livelihoods and industries based on forest resources with a long-term impact.

² *North Europe:* Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden.
Central-West Europe: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland, United Kingdom.
Central-East Europe: Belarus, Czech Republic, Georgia, Hungary, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine.
South-West Europe: Andorra, Holy See, Italy, Malta, Monaco, Portugal, Spain.
South-East Europe: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey.

Table 2. Forest area, net annual increment and fellings, 2005.

Country	Forest & other wooded land		Forest available for wood supply		Net annual increment	Fellings	Fellings, % of net annual increment
	million ha	% of land area	million ha	% of forest	million m3 (over bark)	million m3 (over bark)	
EU27 **	177.0	42	129.	73	764.0*	460.8*	60*
Belgium	0.7	23	0.7	96	5.3	4.5	85
Bulgaria	3.7	34	2.6	70	14.1	5.8	41
Czech Republic	2.6	34	2.5	95	20.5	17.2	84
Denmark	0.6	15	0.4	61	5.2	1.8	35
Germany ***	11.1	32	11.0	99*	122.0*	60.8	50*
Estonia	2.4	56	2.1	89	11.0	5.7	52
Ireland	0.7	10	0.7	92	:	:	:
Greece	6.5	51	3.5	53	3.8*	1.8	48*
Spain	28.2	57	10.5	37*	28.6*	19.1	67*
France	17.3	31	14.7	85	102.5	56.6	55
Italy	11.0	37	8.9	81	38.3	10.1	26
Cyprus	0.4	42	0.0	11	0.0	0.0	16
Latvia	3.1	51	2.8	90	16.5	11.3	68
Lithuania	2.2	35	1.8	83	9.9	7.2	73
Luxembourg	0.1	34	0.1	98	0.7	0.2	38
Hungary	1.9	22	1.7	86	12.9	7.2	56
Malta	0.0	1	-	-	-	-	-
Netherlands	0.4	11	0.3	81	2.2	1.6	70
Austria	4.0	48	3.4	84	31.3*	18.8*	60*
Poland ***	9.2	30	8.4	91	67.6	37.2	55
Portugal	3.9	42	2.0*	52*	12.9*	13.3	103*
Romania	6.6	29	4.6*	70*	34.6	15.9	46
Slovenia	1.3	65	1.2	88	7.3	3.2	44
Slovakia	1.9	40	1.8	91	12.0	9.0	75
Finland	23.3	77	20.0	86	92.9	64.5	69
Sweden	30.9	75	21.2	69	91.4	78.1	86
United Kingdom	2.9	12	2.4	83	20.7	9.9	48

(Source: Eurostat)³

* Estimated value

: Data not available

** Ireland excluded for net annual increment and fellings

- Very small amount

*** Data do not cover other wooded land

A significant part of forests in Europe serve as a protection for ecosystems goods and services used by surrounding populations, such as ensuring the availability and quality of drinking water, and preventing vulnerable areas from further soil erosion. It is widely expected that climate change will increase the pressure on these ecosystems goods and services.

2.1.2 Forestry in the EU

Forests provide income and employment in rural areas, but the impact on income and job generation through Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) and forestry concerns several processing and service sectors. Wood is still the main source of income for forest owners. However, today's view on forests is more multifunctional, and many non-wood forest goods

³ <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/eurostat/home/>

and services (NWFGS) (e.g. berries, mushrooms, recreation and tourism) can also provide a source of income to rural communities. NWFGS are in fact increasing in importance, especially for certain regions. For instance, cork is an important forest product in the EU, with approximately 1.7 million ha of cork oak forests (mainly in Portugal and Spain) accounting for 80% of the worldwide production of cork.

Many European countries have as their objective to increase employment through forestry and the forest sector, in particular within the context of rural development (MCPFE/UNECE/FAO, 2007). However, the socio-economic conditions and the role forests play for rural livelihoods vary significantly. As can be seen in Table 3, one of the latest available sources for data on forest ownership in EU27 demonstrates that around 60% of the forest area (excluding OWL) is in private ownership, while around 40% is publicly owned (Forest Europe, 2011). The share of private ownership is however diverse. The highest share of privately owned forest area is in Portugal (92.7%), followed by Austria (80.4%), Sweden (80.3%) and France (74%) (UNECE, 2010b).

Table 3. Ownership of forest, 1990-2010.

Country	Forest [1000 ha]							
	Public				Private			
	1990	2000	2005	2010	1990	2000	2005	2010
Austria	874	928	906	858	2363	2332	2405	2482
Belgium	294	290	299	301	383	377	374	377
Bulgaria	3327	3041	3201	3408	0	272	395	423
Cyprus	106	118	119	119	55	54	54	54
Czech Republic	2519	2023	1999	2041	110	614	648	616
Denmark	140	138	155	139	306	348	387	424
Estonia	2090	899	894	858	0	953	978	976
Finland	6726	7213	6860	6699	15163	15245	15306	15389
France	3782	3984	4026	4113	10755	11369	11688	11841
Germany	5694	5846	5846	5708	4368	4824	4824	5283
Greece	2557	2790	2907		742	811	845	-
Hungary	1792	1155	1165	1178	0	751	814	849
Ireland	353	399	400	400	112	236	295	337
Italy	2549	2811	2942	3073	5041	5558	5817	6076
Latvia	3132	1749	1781	1655	32	1464	1513	1635
Lithuania	1945	1562	1404	1366	0	458	717	784
Luxembourg	40	41	41	41	46	46	46	46
Malta	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0
Netherlands	176	184	184	184	169	176	181	181
Poland	7406	7535	7610	7661	1475	1524	1590	1658
Portugal	53	54	54		3274	3366	3382	-
Romania	6371	6010	5090	4398	0	356	1301	2097
Slovakia	1922	1006	996	980	0	830	823	827
Slovenia	442	365	323	291	746	868	920	962
Spain	4332	4988	5077	5336	9486	11998	12214	12836
Sweden	-	-	7522	7664	-	-	20990	20941
United Kingdom	1081	1011	983	959	1530	1782	1862	1922

(Source: Forest Europe, 2011)

There are 64,000 holdings of forest and OWL in public ownership and several million holdings in private ownership within EU27 (estimates range from 11 to 16 million private owners (MCPFE/UNECE/FAO, 2007; CEPF, 2009). The average size of a public holding is 975 ha,

while the average size of a private holding is 12.7 ha (FAO, 2006). However, 61% of all private forest holdings have an area of less than 1 ha and 86% of all holdings belong to the size classes of up to 5 ha (UNECE, 2010b). As regards employment, there were 492 000 people employed in forestry, logging and related services within the EU27 in 2005 (Eurostat). The significance of the forest sector for jobs is not mainly in forest management but in the wood processing industries (e.g. sawmills, pulp and paper and other related products).

A key challenge for the European forest sector is the current property structure and its development. Forests are to a large extent in private hands and the recent trend has been towards a higher fragmentation of forest holdings (Forest Europe, 2011). Implementing active management strategies is key in order to respond to the multiple aspirations we have for our forests (e.g. wood, energy, biodiversity, recreation and other ecosystems goods and services) and mobilising individual forest owners with small forest holdings has become a critical issue.

Connected to these topics is the management of forests and the fact that formal training of forest owners in forest management and the development of markets and infrastructure also differ across EU27. Even more, the fragmentation of forest ownership and the high share of non-operational private forests without any forest management activities (and the lack of capacity in private forestry) remains a problem in many European countries (BOKU, 2010; CEPF, 2009). Besides this, other issues affecting forestry, such as rising food costs and an increasing demand for bio-fuels, are expected to increase the use of land for agriculture. This has, however, been made more difficult nowadays as most European countries have laws that make forest clearance and conversion to other land uses difficult, which means that the provision of environmental services is a priority (FAO, 2009). Forest management is thus expected to continue to provide an ever-growing range of functions.

For wood production, it should also be highlighted that the recent economic downturn has had an impact on the viability of the European forest sector. The downturn is likely to remain a challenge for the forest sector, especially for small-scale forest owners, but the increased demand for wood may change this trend (e.g. wood as a renewable source for energy). The forest sector is furthermore influenced by issues such as globalisation, societal developments and direct foreign investments to emerging markets, as well as global issues such as climate change. But regardless of these developments, industrial wood remains the main source of revenue that finances forestry, while the multifunctional role of forests and demand for other forest goods and services is growing, and mechanisms for the payments of ecosystem goods and services are being negotiated.

2.1.3 Forest-based Industries in the EU

In economic terms, Europe's forests provide renewable supplies of environmentally friendly materials, products and services, such as timber, food, energy, fuel and tourism. The Forest-based Industries (F-BI) in EU27 include the woodworking, printing, as well as pulp and paper manufacturing and converting industries. These industries comprise around 350 000 enterprises and employ almost 2.6 million people, corresponding to approximately 8.6% of the total manufacturing workforce in Europe (see

Table 4). In 2005 the F-BIs generated a turnover of EUR 380 billion. The small enterprises active in F-BIs account for approximately 15% of the manufacturing business population. Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME) are predominant in the woodworking and printing sectors, while the manufacturing and converting of pulp, paper and paperboard is dominated by larger enterprises operating on a global scale (Eurostat). In many parts of rural areas in Europe the F-BIs play an important role in maintaining sustainable employment and rural livelihood.

Wood is the most important forest product overall, but up to two-thirds of annual wood growth is used for a variety of building materials, furniture and other products (including energy). In paper making, wood represents more than 30%, and in the sawmill industry 65-70% of total

costs for the F-BIs. Since the price for raw materials varies considerably within EU27, and economic fluctuations affect the situation (e.g. through currency rates), average personnel costs in the F-BIs of EU27 were EUR 29 100 in 2005, but there is considerable variation in the average annual personnel costs.

Table 4. Employment in the Forest-based Industries.

Region	Employment (1 000 persons) by sector (2010)			Total
	Forestry and logging (ISIC/NACE 02)	Manufacture of wood and products of wood (ISIC/NACE 16)	Manufacture of paper and paper products (ISIC/NACE 17)	
North Europe	97	175	74	346
Central-West Europe	107	450	368	925
Central-East Europe	267	443	169	879
South-West Europe	93	343	146	582
South-East Europe	101	227	78	406
EU-27	478	1 397	701	2 576

(Source: Forest Europe, 2011).

Since environmental services are increasingly an important determinant of competitiveness for the F-BI, the rules and regulations across the EU27 has made wood production less competitive. Other countries across the globe enjoy a non-sustainable competitive advantage because they have less environmental requirements for their forest sector (UNECE/FAO, 2008). The European F-BI is however expected to retain its leadership in the production of technologically advanced products, such as glue and cross-laminated timber, honeycomb boards and bio-refinery products.

2.2 Overview of the policy framework

2.2.1 International policy setting

The international policy landscape where the EU Forestry Strategy and EU Forest Action Plan appear is wide. Since the 1990s both international and pan-European regional process have addressed forest-related issues and supported Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) – now and then also raising interest for a Legally-Binding Agreement (LBA) on forests on a regional or global scale.

The **United Nations Conference on Environment and Development** (UNCED), organisers of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, adopted the Forest Principles together with the Agenda 21 (Chapter 11. Combating Deforestation). The Rio+20 conference in June 2012, provided a moment of reflection for the past 20 years.

The **United Nations Forum on Forests** (UNFF) was established in 2000 by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to carry out and build on the work of the Intergovernmental Panel of Forests (IPF) and the Intergovernmental Forum of Forests (IFF) processes 1995/1997. In 2006, the UNFF agreed on four shared Global Objectives on Forests, sharply focusing on the implementation of SFM. The main outcome of the UNFF is the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests (Forest Instrument), which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2007. The ninth UNFF session in 2011 assessed the overall progress made on the Forest Instrument, and progress towards achieving the four Global Objectives on Forests. The year 2011 was declared the International Year of Forests by the UN to raise awareness and strengthen the sustainable management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests for the benefit of current and future generations.

The **FOREST EUROPE** (FE) is a policy process launched in 1990 (formerly the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests (MCPFE)) with the aim to work towards the protection and sustainable management of forests throughout the pan-European region. A total of six ministerial conferences during 1990-2011 have identified key forest policy issues and concluded resolutions as political commitments of the European countries – the latest conference took place in Oslo, Norway in 2011. In total 46 countries, including all EU Member States and the European Union have committed to the cooperation and policy deliberations. Major outputs were, for example, the definition of the FE approach to SFM (Helsinki Resolution 1, 1993) and to national forest programmes in Europe (Vienna resolution 1, 2003), as well as the pan-European Criteria and Indicators (C&I) for Sustainable Forest Management. The Oslo Ministerial Conference also decided to launch a negotiating process towards a Legally Binding Agreement (LBA) for European forests.

The FE Work Programme addresses a set of prioritised joint European actions:

- (1) Further development of sustainable forest management and its tools,
- (2) Further improvements in forest monitoring and reporting,
- (3) Strengthened efforts against illegal logging and related trade,
- (4) Valuation of forest ecosystem services,
- (5) Social issues in a Green economy,
- (6) Servicing the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe, and
- (7) Communication and Outreach.

The programme elements and related activities will be carried out in cooperation with partners and other organisations, such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations UN (FAO), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the European Forest Institute (EFI), and should help to strengthen cooperation with relevant regional bodies and processes in Europe and elsewhere. According to the “**Oslo Ministerial Mandate for Negotiating a Legally Binding Agreement on forests in Europe**” an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) has been established. The Committee shall have completed its tasks no later than 30 June, 2013. It consists of the Chair of the Committee and representatives of Austria, Czech Republic, France, Norway, Poland, Russian Federation, Turkey, Ukraine and Spain as permanent observers. The first session of the Committee took place on 27 February to 2 March, 2012 in Vienna, Austria, with the aim of coordinating the provision of guidance for developing the first draft negotiating text in terms of its basic structure, main components and content.

Several international and pan-European regional processes have however had an important impact on forest-related issues and the definition of Sustainable Forest Management at the European Union level. In 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro led to the **United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity** (CBD). As signatories, the European Community and individual Member States committed to its objectives for conserving biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the use of genetic resources, also by forest ecosystems. The CBD provided an expanded work programme on forest biological diversity in 2002. More recently, at the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 10) to the CBD, a decision was reached on a new Strategic Plan for 2011 to 2020 and resulted in a guiding framework to coordinate and align the work to implement the CBD. Following the failure to meet the globally agreed target of substantially reducing biodiversity loss by 2010 (CBD, 2010), the new plan (the Aichi targets) commits to “*take effective and urgent action to halt the loss of biodiversity in order to ensure that by 2020 ecosystems are resilient and continue to provide essential services, thereby securing the planet’s variety of life, and contributing to human well-being and poverty eradication*”. To achieve these objectives, it sets out 20 headline targets under five strategic goals to be achieved by 2020. Targets 5 and 7 specifically concern forest ecosystems and forestry, and refer to the reduction of natural forest habitat loss and fragmentation, as well as the sustainable management of forest areas.

The Earth Summit resulted in another milestone in terms of international environmental agreements with key impacts on EU policies, the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change** (UNFCCC). It aims at stabilising greenhouse gas emissions in order to prevent dangerous anthropogenic changes to the climate. Parties to the UNFCCC are required to publish national inventories of emissions and national (or regional) programmes of action on emissions and sinks. The Kyoto Protocol to the Convention was adopted in 1997 and sets up concrete emission reduction targets for the period 2008 to 2012 as compared to 1990 levels. Following reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on challenges ahead to meet the objectives of the Convention, negotiations continued on commitments under the UNFCCC and potential follow-up to the Kyoto Protocol agreements after 2012. Key aspects of relevance to the forest sector include discussions on how to account for the role of land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) in achieving climate change commitments. Under the existing Protocol, accounting is only mandatory for emissions and removals related to afforestation, reforestation and deforestation, and are linked to the role of forests in storing and sequestering carbon. It is optional for emissions and removals related to forest management. Discussions in meetings of the Parties in Durban (COP17, CMP7) at the end of 2011 made progress towards agreeing on a new set of accounting rules for LULUCF activities, though not actually adopting a formal amendment to the Protocol. Of high importance is the EU role in negotiating improvements in the international accounting regime for the land use and land use change (LULUCF) sector that were agreed at the Durban meeting of the UNFCCC Committee of the Parties (COP 17) in December 2011. Besides re-affirming the mandatory accounting for deforestation, afforestation and reforestation, the Durban agreement introduced mandatory accounting for emissions and removals from forest management on a mandatory basis for the 2nd commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, including the use of a more consistent methodology for the calculating of net emissions and removals through forest management by using 'reference levels' (projections of 'business as usual' emissions) and thus replacing the much criticised earlier 'cap' approach to accounting for net forestry emissions.

In addition to the CBD and UNFCCC, the agreement on Chapter 11 of Agenda 21 on Combating Deforestation at the Earth Summit was followed by the adoption of the **United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification** (UNCCD) in 1994. The ten-year strategy of the UNCCD (2008-2018) was adopted in 2007 and the implementation of the Convention is centred on five regional implementation annexes. EU Member States are involved in two, namely, the Northern Mediterranean and Central-Eastern Europe (CEE). The UNFCCC COP-15 also recognised the crucial role of **reducing emission from deforestation and forest degradation** (REDD), which was introduced to the UNFCCC agenda in 2005. In order to enhance the removal of greenhouse gas emission by forests, the establishment of a mechanism (including REDD+)⁴ is underway. The multilateral mechanism aims at mobilising financial resources from developed countries to help achieve this goal.

Global concern over forests has moreover materialised in a process to combat illegal logging and the trade of illegal timber. Besides of having an environmental and social impact these activities generate a considerable economic loss. The World Bank estimates that governments worldwide lose between US\$ 10-15 billion per year as a result of illegal logging; money that could be spent towards economic development. As a result the **Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEGT)** was formed, which has resulted in several regional initiatives supported by for example the World Bank and bilateral arrangements to restrict trade of illegal logging (FLEGT – Forest Law Enforcement and Governance and Trade).

Concerning forest-related international organisations in the field of trade there are the **World Trade Organization** (WTO) – WTO agreements require governments to make their trade policies transparent by notifying the WTO about laws in force and measures adopted – and the **International Tropical Timber Organisation** (ITTO), whose members are both from the producing and consuming countries. The latest International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA) entered into force in December 2011 and will affect trade. Also the Convention on

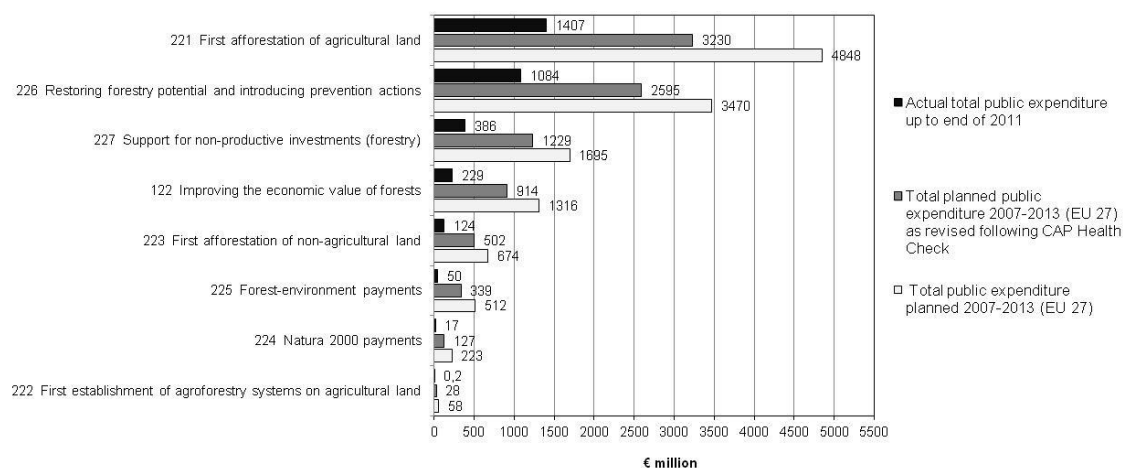
⁴ <http://www.un-redd.org>

International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), as well as the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), affect trade related to forests. For trade of forest reproductive material, the OECD Scheme for the Control of Forest Reproductive Material Moving in International Trade is important. The scheme is open to OECD Members as well as to other States. According to the OECD website 15 EU Member States are implementing the scheme that aims to reduce the burden on trade and controls over the world and to improve traceability. Other important international organisations influencing forest-related policy-making in Europe are the United Nations Economic Commission to Europe (UNECE), the Timber Committee coordination and the FAO European Forestry Commission. The UNECE region covers countries of Europe, but also countries in North America (Canada and United States), Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) and Western Asia (Israel).

The institutional and political framework of forest policy is complex and influenced by several institutional players dealing with forest-related policies at the European and international level, as well as by the EU Member States directly. These international policy processes and instruments deal (directly or indirectly) with forests and represent, as noted above, a range of general frameworks that have an impact on EU and national forest policy.

2.2.2 Community policy setting

The EU Treaties that established the European Community make no provision for a common forestry policy and as a consequence the responsibility for forest policy lies with the Member States. The EU Forestry Strategy and the EU Forest Action Plan (EU FAP) are thus based on the principle of subsidiarity and the concept of shared responsibility. There is nonetheless a number of EU regulations and directives in other policy areas that have a (direct or indirect) influence on forestry and the forest sector. The following section presents the main policy areas related to forests and forestry in the EU, including information on the latest developments since the implementation of the EU FAP in 2007.



Own elaboration from data provided by European Commission ENRD Contact Point (2012)

Figure 2. Forestry measures in EU 27 2007-2013 RDPs – planned, revised (following the CAP Health Check) and actual expenditure up to end of 2011.

Rural Development

The **EAFRD Regulation** is the main instrument for the implementation of the EU Forestry Strategy and the EU Forest Action Plan (2007-2011), which Member States have to take into account when defining their national rural development strategies. Compared to earlier Rural Development Regulations, EAFRD offers a more coherent and structured set of measures that support forestry, with a strong emphasis on Sustainable Forest Management (SFM). Member

States have a total of 40 measures in EAFRD to choose from, out of which 8 are specific forestry measures. All of these (apart from one) are within Axis 2, and should therefore contribute to the EU-level priority objectives of biodiversity, water and climate change⁵. Member States are free to choose measures and allocate budgets according to their specific needs in the 88 Rural Development Programmes (RDP) which are a mixture of national and regional programmes. The financial resources allocated by Member States to the 8 forestry-specific measures were initially €12 billion, but after revisions to the RDPs following the CAP Health Check, this was reduced to less than €9 billion (corresponding to less than 5% of the total financial resources devoted to the 2007-2013 RDPs). Figure 2 shows that by the end of 2011 there appears to have been significant under-spending, particularly in terms of the allocation to the forest-environment and Natura 2000 measures where less than 15% of the reduced budget has been spent. The Commission presented a draft regulation for the EAFRD 2014-2020 in October 2011, as part of its proposal to reform the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The EAFRD will no longer be divided into three areas but into six priorities linked to the EU's 2020 strategy. The first five priorities concern agriculture, and only the last priority defines rural development in terms other than agricultural.

Environment

The **Sixth Environment Action Programme** (Decision No. 1600/2002/EC) adopted in 2002 established a ten-year framework for Community action on the environment, focusing on four thematic areas – climate change, nature and biodiversity, environment and health, and natural resources and waste. Though forestry is not specifically addressed by the overall aims of the programme, priority actions were set out for forestry as an important sub-area for achieving objectives related to nature and biodiversity as well as climate change. With the Sixth Environment Action Programme nearing its end in 2012, the European Commission presented its final assessment. It concludes that generally the Programme has been helpful in providing a framework for EU environmental policy over the past 10 years, though a number of shortcomings and gaps remain, in particular in relation to an inadequate implementation and enforcement of EU environmental policy (Von Homeyer and Withana, 2011).

Linked to the discussion of the added value of a Seventh Environment Action Programme is the development of a range of strategic environmental policy initiatives recently adopted or currently underway, including the flagship initiative on a **resource-efficient Europe** envisaged by the **Europe 2020 strategy** (COM(2010) 21 final) under the heading of sustainable growth, and the resulting roadmap (COM(2011) 571 final) presented at the end of 2011. Following the failure to meet the EU 2010 target of halting biodiversity loss (COM(2010) 548 final), a new vision for 2050 and a new target for 2020 were endorsed by the European Council in 2010⁶. To deliver this 2020 target a **new EU Biodiversity Strategy** (COM(2011) 244 final) was adopted in 2011, setting out six mutually supportive and inter-dependent targets aimed at conserving and restoring species and habitats, maintaining and enhancing ecosystems and their services, ensuring the sustainability of agriculture, forestry and fisheries, combating invasive alien species, and stepping up the EU's contribution to global biodiversity. The specific 2020 target for sustainable forestry is to have Forest Management Plans compliant with SFM in place for all publicly owned forests and for forest holdings (above a certain size) receiving funding under EU Rural Development Policy. The purpose is to deliver measurable improvement on the EU 2010 Baseline in conservation status of forest species and habitats, and in the provision of ecosystem services. The target for the implementation of the Natura 2000 network under the **Birds and Habitats Directives** (Directive 92/43/EEC and 2009/147/EC) marks a shift in focus to management and restoration of the network, provoking discussions about how to guarantee appropriate financing (SEC(2011) 1573 Final).

The **LIFE programme**, on-going since 1992, is the only financial instrument dedicated to the environment. The most recent LIFE+ Programme 2007-2013 (Regulation (EC) No 614/2007) is

⁵ http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/agriculture/general_framework/l60032_en.htm.

⁶ European Council Conclusions of 26 March 2010, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/113591.pdf

the fourth of its kind, and has a budget of €2.143 billion. It is designed to contribute to the implementation, updating and development of EU environmental policy and legislation, including the protection of Natura 2000 forests, forest monitoring and forest fire prevention awareness and training campaigns. Following a mid-term evaluation and an impact assessment on the future financing programme for the environment in 2010 (GHK et al. 2010; SEC(2011) 1542 final, SEC(2011) 1543 final), the European Commission called for its continuation into the next funding period 2014-2020. The proposed Regulation published in late 2011 (COM(2011) 874 final) for the establishment of a programme specifically dedicated to funding the environment and climate action (LIFE) envisages a programme more aligned to Europe 2020 objectives, serving as a financial instrument for the environment as well as for climate action.

Energy policy

The energy question represents one of the greatest challenges that the EU has to face today. Rising energy prices and the increasing dependence on energy imports is jeopardising EU27's security and competitiveness. A key development to cut emissions and mitigate climate change has been the Commission **Biomass Action Plan** adopted in 2005. It set out measures to increase the development of biomass energy from wood, waste and agricultural crops by creating market-based incentives for its use and removing barriers to the development of the market. The **Renewable Energy Directive** (2009) sets out a strategy to enable both increasing security of energy supply and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It improves the legal framework for promoting renewable electricity, calls for national action plans that establish pathways for the development of renewable energy sources including bioenergy, creates cooperation mechanisms to help achieve the targets cost effectively, and establishes the sustainability criteria for biofuels.

The **Climate and Energy Package** that was adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in 2009 sets up targets (known as the "20-20-20" targets). This includes reaching a level of 20% renewable energy in the total EU energy consumption by 2020, reducing GHG emissions by 20% in 2020 and reducing energy consumption by 20% in 2020. As far as the renewable energy objective is concerned, the Renewable Energy Directive (Directive 2009/28/EC), was approved in June 2009. The directive requires Member States to produce a proportion of energy from renewable sources so that the EU shall obtain the target of at least 20% of total energy from renewable sources by 2020. The directive amends and subsequently repeals the Directive on Electricity Production from Renewable Energy Sources (Directive 2001/77/EC) and the Directive on the promotion of the use of biofuels and other renewable fuels for transport (Directive 2003/30/EC).

Climate Action

The EU and its individual Member States are Parties to the UNFCCC and have ratified the Kyoto Protocol. As such they have committed to the achievement of relevant objectives, and have had key roles to play in the related negotiations. An important basis for the development of policy instruments at EU level have been the first and second phase of the **European Climate Change Programme** (ECCP I and II) in 2000 and 2005. A core instrument of the programme includes the Directive 2003/87/EC establishing the **EU Emission Trading Scheme** (EU ETS) adopted in 2003, which allows participants to use most credits from projects enhancing forest sinks in third countries under the Joint Implementation / Clean Development Mechanisms (established under the Kyoto Protocol) towards fulfilling their obligations under the EU ETS. These EU climate policy instruments were further developed as part of the **Climate and Renewable Energy Package** in 2009 (Directive 2009/29/EC). The package outlines key measures for achieving relevant targets by 2020, as agreed by the European Council in March 2007. These include the political commitments to reduce EU greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20 per cent below 1990 levels, to increase the share of renewable energy in EU final energy consumption to 20 per cent, and to save 20 per cent on the EU projected energy consumption. The new EU ETS Directive was complemented by the

Effort-Sharing-Decision that contains binding reduction targets for the post-2012 period for those sectors not covered by the trading scheme (Decision No 406/2009/EC).

In addition, the Commission has published a range of policy documents setting its role in the international post-2012 negotiations. This includes the **Communication addressing the challenges of deforestation and forest degradation to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss** (COM(2008)645). The Communication was intended to form the basis of the EU position at the COP-15 to UNFCCC, where the potential use of reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) in developing countries formed a key element of the negotiations. Key aspect on the role of forests in climate change discussions also refers to their potential functions for adapting to climate change as well as the potential risks they face. In 2007, the Commission adopted a **Green Paper on Adapting to climate change in Europe – options for EU action** (COM (2007) 354 final)), followed by a White Paper **Adapting to climate change: Towards a European framework for action** (COM (2009) 147 final) in 2009. As part of the follow-up process to the White Paper, in March 2010 the Commission released a **Green Paper on forest protection and information – preparing forests for climate change** (COM(2010)66) to engage stakeholders in a debate on the EU's approach to forest protection and information with regard to the likely impact from climate change.

The recent **roadmap for moving to a competitive low carbon economy** (COM(2011)112), part of the Europe 2020 Strategy, emphasises that forestry practices will have an important impact on the capacity of the sector to preserve and sequester carbon in soils and forests, and the importance of a holistic approach, for example, to LULUCF in EU climate policy. The Commission initiated a **public consultation** on the contribution of the EU agriculture and forestry sector to the EU commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20 per cent or, if conditions are right, by 25 per cent compared to 1990 levels by 2020 (ENTEC, 2011). This was followed by the recently released proposal for a Decision on accounting rules and action plans on emissions and removals from LULUCF (COM(2012) 93 final), accompanied by a Communication (COM(2012) 94 final) and Impact Assessment (SWD (2102) 41).

Industrial policy

The Communication on the State of the Competitiveness of the EU Forest-Based and Related Industries (1999) was followed in 2008 by the **Communication on Innovative and Sustainable Forest-based Industries** in the EU (COM(2008) 113 final). The Communication underscores the importance of F-BIs for the EU's Growth and Jobs Strategy, and it addresses the challenges faced by the F-BIs (including access to raw materials, the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, innovation, trade and information of forest-based products). The F-BI Communication is complementary to the EU FAP. The EU FAP and the Communication were originally intended to be published together, but due to administrative complications the F-BI Communication ended up being delayed by 2 years and was adopted in 2008.

Research and technological development policy

The **Seventh Framework Programme (FP7)**⁷ is the main instrument for funding research at the EU level in 2007-2013. It contains four specific programmes that correspond to four major objectives of European research policy: cooperation, ideas, people, and capacities. Topics related to the multifunctional management of forests and to the F-BIs (found in the work programmes of cooperation the programme) under the following thematic priorities: Priority 2, “*Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, Biotechnology*”, Priority 5 “*Energy*”, and Priority 6 “*Environment (incl. climate change)*”, and also in specific activities covering a wider field of research in support of Community policies, such as, Theme 4 on Nanosciences, Nanotechnologies, Materials and New Production Technologies (NMP) that funds industrial research, including the F-BI.

⁷ http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html

Horizon 2020 will replace FP7 as the next EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation⁸. It will be the financial instrument implementing the Innovation Union, a Europe 2020 flagship initiative aimed at securing Europe's competitiveness, running from 2014 to 2020. The new programme for research and innovation is part of the drive to create new growth and jobs. Horizon 2020 aims at a transition to a sustainable and competitive European economy based on renewable and resource-efficient raw materials and energy sources. Thus it aims to facilitate the transition to a sustainable society and will have many implications for the forest sector.

Civil Protection - Natural and man-made hazards

The EU Civil Protection Mechanism is made up of 32 states (27 EU Member States in addition to Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) that cooperate in the field of civil protection to better protect people, the environment, property and cultural heritage in the event of major natural or man-made disasters occurring both inside and outside the EU. The key instrument for European civil protection is the **Civil Protection Mechanism and its Civil Protection Financial Instrument** (Directive 2007/162/EC, Euratom), which was established in 2001 and covers three phases of the disaster management cycle: Prevention, Preparedness and Response. In relation to forests, the Commission has funded coordination actions with regard to fire risk minimisation and fire fighting training and coordination.

Regional policy

EU Regional policy supports an integrated approach to regional development, considering the three dimensions of sustainable development and taking advantage of natural assets, such as forests. One of the principal conditions for creating territorial cohesion in Europe is to ensure complementarity and balance between urban and rural areas. The **European Regional Development Fund** (ERDF) 2007-2013 (Regulation (EC) No. 1080/2006) has provided financial support for the implementation of specific actions of the EU Forest Action Plan in the Member States under the condition that these actions are coherent to the regional priorities of development and to the Community Strategic Guidelines. The cross-border, transnational and interregional projects on forests and forestry represent a genuine added value of Cohesion Policy in this area. In addition, natural risk prevention, such as forest fires, is recognised as a priority in the Community Strategic Guidelines. This has led to numerous projects at regional and local levels, often as cross-border or interregional cooperation projects.

The Commission's proposal for the next financing period 2014-2020 is already under discussion. The cohesion policies legislative proposal was published in October 2011 and the **Common Strategic Framework** (CSF) was presented by the Commission in March 2012. The cohesion policy continues to promote economic growth, job creation and competitiveness, with the overarching goal to support the **Europe2020 strategy** with clear commitments of national and regional authorities to meet Europe's growth and jobs targets for 2020. It is foreseen that there will be fewer priorities in the programmes (although the forest-related topics may also be financed in the future). Increased funding for territorial cooperation is furthermore foreseen to support cooperation across regions in Europe.

Development cooperation policy

The **Financing Instrument for Development Cooperation 2007-2013** (Regulation (EC) No 1905/2006) aims to eradicate poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals *inter alia* by promoting sustainable development through environmental protection and sustainable management of natural resources. This includes the protection of biodiversity and forests, as well as activities for the conservation and sustainable management of forests with active participation of local communities and forest-dependent individuals.

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/research/horizon2020/index_en.cfm

For SFM and recognising that the EU is one of the world's largest markets for illegal tropical timber, the European Union published the **EU Action Plan for Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT)** in 2003 (COM(2003)251). This Action Plan sets out to prevent the import of illegal wood into the EU, to improve the supply of legal timber and to increase the demand for wood coming from responsibly managed forests. The long-term aim is Sustainable Forest Management. A key element of the Action Plan is a voluntary scheme to ensure that only legally harvested timber is imported into the EU. The Environment and Natural Resource Thematic Programme (ENRTP) has identified FLEGT as a specific theme.

The Council adopted a Regulation in 2005 (Council Regulation (EC) No 2173/2005) that allows for the control of timber that enters into the EU from countries that have signed the FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA). In October 2008, the Commission published a proposal for a regulation that defines the obligations of operators who place timber and timber products on the market, the so-called due diligence proposal (COM(2008)644). This regulation, the **EU Timber Regulation** was adopted in October 2010 (Regulation (EU) No 995/2010) and will be applied from 2013 onwards. It obliges wood importers and traders to know the source of all wood and forest products they purchase and to ensure that it is legally compliant – this also covers wood supply from Europe.

Trade Policy

The EU has promoted the integration of sustainable development into international trade. Trade negotiations with third countries aim at reinforcing sustainability goals and achieving compliance with EU commitments, including multilateral environmental agreements. Forest-related questions can refer to, for example, means to tackle illegal logging and address illegal timber in the EU external trade, as well as tariff preferences (e.g. tropical wood and products classified as non-sensitive and imported from the preferred developing countries).

Plant health and protection

EU Plant health, plant protection and propagating material policy are policy fields that indirectly affect the forest sector. The main objectives of EU legislation on these issues are to protect the safety of feed and food derived from plants, prevent the introduction and spread of organisms harmful to plants or plant products within the EU, and regulate the trade of plants and plant products within the EU as well as imports from the rest of the world in accordance with international standards and obligations. For the forest sector, the following **EU plant health legislation** can be considered influential: Directives 91/414/EEC, 2000/29/EC, and 1999/105/EC, and Regulation (EC) 396/2005.

After the evaluation of the Community acquis on the marketing of seed and plant propagating material in 2008 (FCEC et al. 2008) the Commission identified the need to harmonise a wide range of existing legislation. It is foreseen that a package will be adopted in 2012 on, inter alia, legislation on animal and plant health, linked to official-control Regulation 882/2004 and regulation for seed and plant propagating material. It may thus also include the **Directive on forest reproductive material** (Directive 1999/105/EC). Technical requirements would be addressed as a second step with more detailed implementing regulations.

2.2.3 EU Forestry Strategy

The Council Resolution of 15 December 1998 on a Forestry Strategy for the European Union established a framework for forest-related actions in support of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM), based on the coordination of the forest policies of the Member States and Community policies and initiatives relevant to forests and forestry. It takes into account the commitments made by the EU and its Member States in the relevant international processes, in particular the UNCED in 1992 and its follow-up conferences, and FOREST EUROPE (formerly the Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe) meetings (Strasbourg 1990, Helsinki 1993, Lisbon 1998 and Vienna 2003).

The Strategy emphasises the importance of the multifunctional role of forests and SFM for the development of society, and identifies a series of key elements that form the basis for its implementation. It states that the EU can contribute to the implementation of SFM through common policies (despite the principle of subsidiarity and the concept of shared responsibility). It also emphasises the implementation of international commitments, principles and recommendations through national or sub-national forest programmes or equivalent instruments, and active participation in all forest-related international processes. It further stresses the need to improve coordination, communication and cooperation in all policy areas of relevance to the forest sector.

The main motivation for the EU Forestry Strategy (FS) was the growing concern about the coherence between Member States' forest policy, between different forest-related policies of the EU, and the growing role of forests in different international policy processes. The FS sees itself as a dynamic instrument with a strong emphasis on the coordination of the relevant actors. It aims to bring together the Member States as well as Commission Services to exchange their views and actions. It also encourages a participatory approach to the implementation through stakeholder involvement.

The Commission was requested to report on the implementation of the FS within five years. The implementation report contains the main conclusions on the implementation of the EU Forestry Strategy, presents emerging issues affecting forests and forestry, and outlines possible actions for the future. The report particularly emphasised the societal changes, which produce new demands on forests and the changing policy framework and the need for proactive and dynamic implementation. New challenges were identified for the competitiveness and economic viability of forestry as well as protection of the forests, their bio-diversity and social benefits. The need for better cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination and coherence between different policy fields was stressed. In conclusion, the report called for a shared vision for the forest sector in Europe, better coordination of community actions and Member States, as well as clear objectives and their monitoring. It proposed to develop a EU Forest Action Plan as a framework for implementing this vision (COM(2005)84).

2.2.4 EU Forest Action Plan

Following the Commission Communication on the implementation of the FS, the EU Forest Action Plan (EU FAP) was prepared in 2006. This was done by the Commission Services and Member States, and in close consultation with relevant stakeholders. Its overall objective was to support the multifunctional role of forests and enhance SFM in the Member States, as well as to allow the EU to fulfil its international commitments relating to forests.

In the course of preparing the EU FAP, a common vision of forestry and the contribution that forests and forestry make to modern society was developed: "*Forests for society: long-term multifunctional forestry fulfilling present and future societal needs and supporting forest-related livelihoods*". The Action Plan was structured in four Objectives as follows:

- Objective 1: to improve the long-term competitiveness,
- Objective 2: to improve and protect the environment,
- Objective 3: to contribute to the quality of life, and
- Objective 4: to foster coordination and communication.

With these four Objectives the Action Plan covers the three sustainability dimensions (economic, environmental and socio-cultural) of SFM, and the coordination and communication as a horizontal objective to improve coherence and added value across the three dimensions (see Figure 3). At the stage of preparing the plan in 2006 the global goals that the Action Plan contributes to were also defined in the Lisbon strategy (growth and jobs) and in the Gothenburg agenda for sustainability. These Actions focus on EU added value, for example, where cooperation and action at the EU level brings added value to the national implementation of forest policy and fulfilling obligations defined in international agreements.

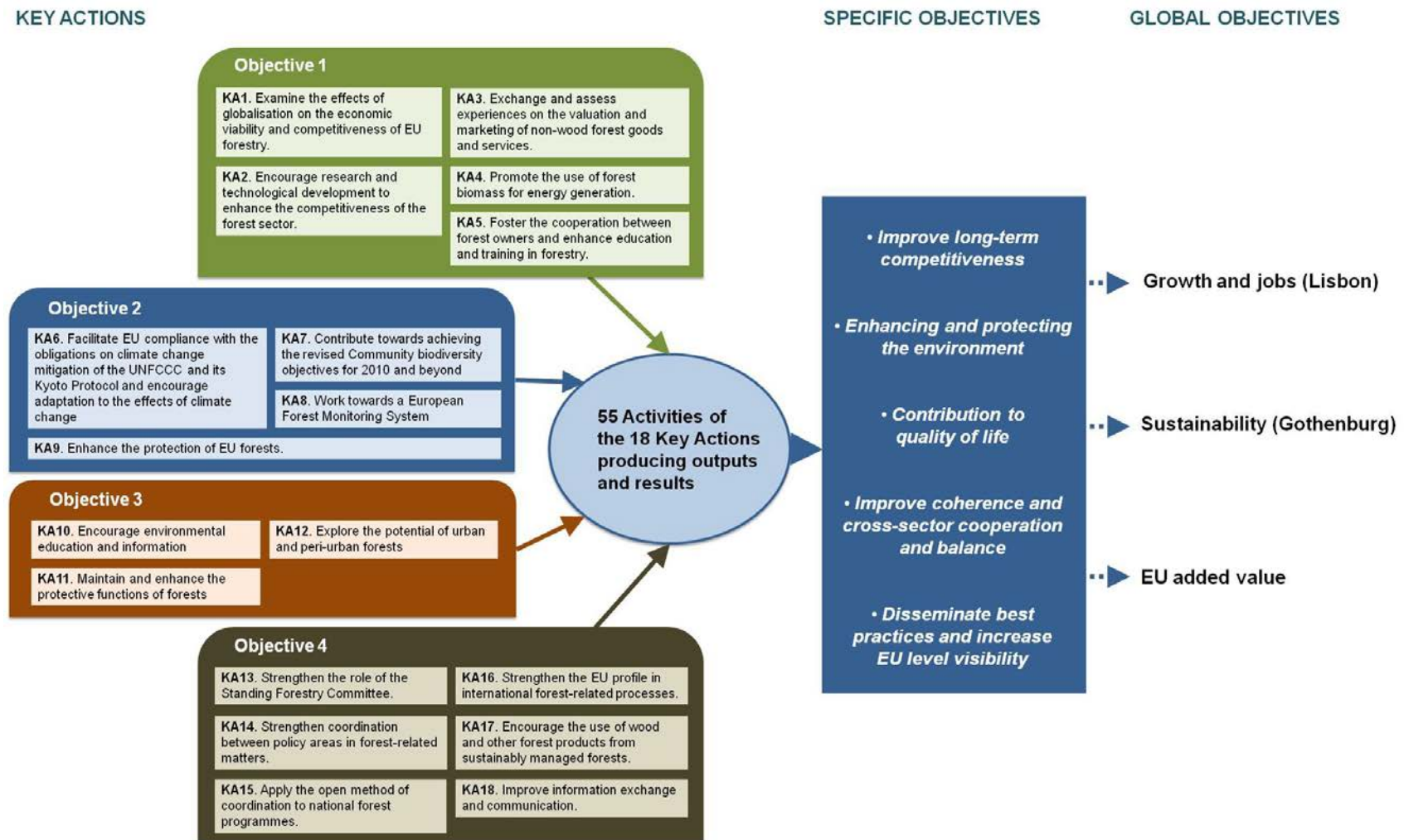


Figure 3. The EU Forest Action Plan Objectives and Key Actions (KA) and the global objectives.

In the multiannual work programme for the Action Plan (2007-2011), the four Objectives were defined by 18 Key Actions (excluding a 19th Key Action on evaluation) and 55 activities. During the implementation, the five-year work programme was detailed in annual work programmes, and the implementation was assessed at the Mid-Term and Ex-Post stage. These two stages of assessment were an integral part of the Action Plan (Key Action 19 Evaluation).

The EU FAP was a tool to coordinate actions related to the forest sector, running in parallel with different policy areas and at different levels of implementation (e.g. international and national levels). It provided guidance to the Commission, Member States and stakeholders in forestry-related issues at the EU level. There were no specific resources allocated for the implementation of the EU FAP, although the plan indicated a number of existing financing instruments (mainly the rural development funds, framework programme for research and development, but also several other sources) that were later utilised in implementing the EU FAP.

In essence, the EU FAP implementation makes use of existing structures. A central body for the implementation is the Standing Forestry Committee (SFC) which was set up by a Council Decision in order to ensure closer and more continuous cooperation in the forest sector between the Member States and the Commission and thereby support forestry measures initiated under the Community agricultural structure and rural development policy. The SFC consists of Member State representatives, mainly those of Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Forestry or Ministry of Environment representatives, but for some countries also regional representatives. Stakeholder participation for the Action Plan is channelled mainly through the Advisory Group on Forestry and Cork (AGFC) that consists of representatives of producers (28 seats), traders (2), industry (11), workers (2), consumers (1) and environmental groups (4). The EU FAP also mentions cooperation with another advisory committee, namely, the Advisory Committee on Community Policy regarding Forestry and Forest-based Industries, which has a central role in implementing the Commission Communication on Innovative and Sustainable Forest-based Industries (COM(2008)113), the so called F-BI Communication Action Plan. For coordination within the Commission, the Inter-services' Group on Forestry (ISGF) was utilised in addition to the formal inter-service consultation process and other communication between the Commission services.

The Action Plan activities were implemented by several Commission Services and Member States (e.g. representatives of the SFC as a contact point to implementation of national forest policies). There was no formal monitoring of the Action Plan activities nor follow-up, but the Commission reports state-of-the-play of the activities for SFC and AGFC together with drafting the detailed annual work programmes.

The mid-term evaluation of the EU FAP report in 2009 concluded four main recommendations that can be summarised as follows:

- (1) Arrange **follow-up and monitoring of the activities** to show how the EU FAP outputs are realised as measures by the EU institutions, Member States and other stakeholders. Meetings of the EU forest directors/nature directors, working parties or expert groups could be utilised to ensure **wide communication and dissemination** of the EU FAP outputs beyond the groups directly involved in implementation of the Action Plan.
- (2) **Stronger links between the EU FAP and National Forest Programmes (or equivalent)** in the Member States should be sought, and the SFC should take an active role in initiating discussions on the development of concrete options for a coherent and integrated approach to SFM, including forest protection and information.
- (3) **Regional approaches and collaborative partnerships (science-policy-practice)** in dealing with regional challenges of forest sector competitiveness, enhancement and protection of forests and contribution of forests to the quality of life should be encouraged to test good practices, foster innovation and ensure subsidiarity.

Furthermore, an information exchange should be organised within the SFC on funding instruments that the Member States have mobilised to support the EU FAP.

- (4) **Follow-up on the EU FAP after 2011 – and the EU Forestry Strategy** – a discussion should be started within the EU FAP framework.

The report furthermore emphasised the importance of open dialogue on the outcome of the EU FAP mid-term evaluation within the Commission, in the SFC, the Council Working Party on Forestry and in the Member States and with stakeholders in the AGFC and AC-FBI. This discussion was proposed to be arranged with the Member States (SFC), Commission (both ISGs), AGFC and AC-FBI concerning the need for action during the remainder of the EU FAP implementation period, as well as the options for post-2011.

Following the mid-term evaluation report of the EU FAP and discussions on its recommendations in the Standing Forestry Committee (SFC), the SFC meeting in March 2010 recommended discussing a broader forest policy context, thus including considerations on the future of the EU Forestry Strategy, as well as the issues raised by the Green Paper on forest protection and information as a follow-up in 2010 for the White Paper on adaptation to climate change. At the same time in 2010-12, there was also the ongoing work on a possible LBA on forests within the FE context. As a concrete step to structure the deliberations, SFC ad hoc working group on the revision of the EU Forestry Strategy was established, and the Commission arranged a joint session of SFC and AGFC in April 2011 as a kick-off workshop to discuss the objectives of the future Forestry Strategy, and the forms of coordination of forest-related policies in the EU. The working group should have concluded its work during the spring in 2012, and provide an input – together with the input from the SFC ad hoc working group on forest monitoring and information, as well as results from the EU FAP ex-post evaluation – to the Commission work on the future of the EU Forestry Strategy.

2.2.5 National forest policies and National Forest Programmes in the EU Member States

The EU Forestry Strategy and the EU FAP identify that the international commitments, principles and recommendations should be implemented through national and sub-national forest programmes or appropriate instruments developed by the Member States. The FAP envisages a role for the Commission and the SFC to support the policy development on Member State level and to support the exchange of Member States' experiences. The importance of this role was confirmed through the Mid-Term Evaluation, both in terms of policy contents and the way of policy-making, such as stakeholder participation. The Mid-Term Evaluation, however, also concluded that the EU FAP had only a limited role in supporting national forest policies and in supporting the development and implementation of National Forest Programmes (NFPs).

The NFPs have been established in most of the EU Member States in accordance with the pan-European forest policy process. Rather than being one approach, the NFPs cover a wide range of approaches to develop, program and implement forest policies in a country or a region. NFPs can be formal or informal governmental processes, with the resulting documents formally adopted or not. Some countries identify their NFP as a set of policies or strategies addressing SFM. According to the UNECE/FAO/FE State of Europe's Forests report from 2011, all 37 reporting countries have an NFP or a similar process in place. Around half of the European countries report having a "*formal NFP process*", a quarter reports that they have similar processes that are "*explicitly guided by NFP principles*", and the rest say they have "*similar processes*". This means that the share of countries with formal NFP processes is steadily increasing, but that there are still significant differences between the Member States in terms of the use of the NFP principles, such as stakeholder participation, cross-sectoral approach and iterative processes. In the recent years, the number of countries with formal NFPs has been increasing, the mentioned NFP principles are increasingly respected, and more attention is paid on legal frameworks, effective implementation and monitoring. In a

number of countries, institutional arrangements were recently changed (e.g. in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe).

NFP processes have similar goals on Member State level as the EU FAP has on European level, namely, better collaboration between different political-administrational bodies and stakeholders. Also the mechanisms of collaboration are similar, as the NFP processes are voluntary just like the EU FAP. The basic NFP principles are increasingly accepted as new modes of governance in forest policy. The participation of central stakeholders is, for instance, much more common in the recent generation of NFPs (or similar policy processes) in comparison to earlier forest policy documents or processes. According to the State of Europe's Forests report from 2011, forest owners, environmental and social groups, industry, education and research in practically all countries participated in the process to differing extents, and in differing forms of institutionalisation or formality. Most commonly, the stakeholders were involved through workshops or consultations. Iterative planning processes are also becoming more mainstream, for example, in the form of periodic work or action plans. In most countries, representatives from other policy fields were involved in reaching a holistic and inter-sectoral approach. This, though, took different forms and happened to varying degrees. The countries also report that they fully or partly take into account links to international commitments, including EU policies.

2.3 State-of-the-play and developments with regard to implementation of the EU Forest Action Plan, 2007-2011

The following section provides a brief overlook on the state-of-the-play for the EU Forest Action Plan (EU FAP) and its implementation. Each EU FAP objective is reviewed with implementation of its Key Actions, including summary information about the Member States' implementation of the EU FAP activities as reported in the ex-post evaluation survey, and a brief overview on the key developments and initiatives relevant to the EU FAP goals.

2.3.1 Objective 1: Improving long-term competitiveness

The forest sector in Europe (and internationally) has faced several challenges due to developments in European economy in recent years. Particularly since 2008 the economic climate for the forest sector has changed. This has had implications for investments foreseen to increase the competitiveness of the sector as a whole, for example there have been lower research and development intensities in the Member States due to budget cuts as a result of the economic crisis (JRC, 2011).

The global economic crisis has slowed down the demand for wood products. Since the onset of the economic downturn there has been a significant decline in the market for wood and paper products, with an especially steep decline experienced by Europe's pulp and paper industry (FAO, 2010), but also the sawmilling sector with many small-and-medium sized companies in Europe. There was only a brief period of market recovery prior to the most recent economic downturn in 2011. At the same time increasing fossil fuel prices and a changing policy environment (e.g. initiatives to support renewable energy sources) has driven the European forest sector to significantly increase the promotion of wood as a source for energy (Magar et al. 2011; Stupak et al. 2007). This has not only resulted in an increased demand for wood as a renewable source of energy, but it has added more pressure on wood raw material extraction throughout Europe. These developments are also supported with the aspirations to develop Europe as a bio-based economy. Forests providing a source of renewable resources for sustainable economic growth, energy security, lower carbon emissions and jobs and in rural areas are in the core of EU FAP Objective 1.

The five Key Actions under EU FAP Objective 1 aim at improving the long-term competitiveness of the European forest sector. At the mid-term evaluation in 2009, a major part of the Key Actions had already been started or even carried out during the first two years of the EU FAP implementation period. A state-of-the-play review on each Key Action is

presented below. As Figure 4 shows, Member States reported on 9 activities, majority of which had been either carried out or in progress. For details about the activities see the following pages.

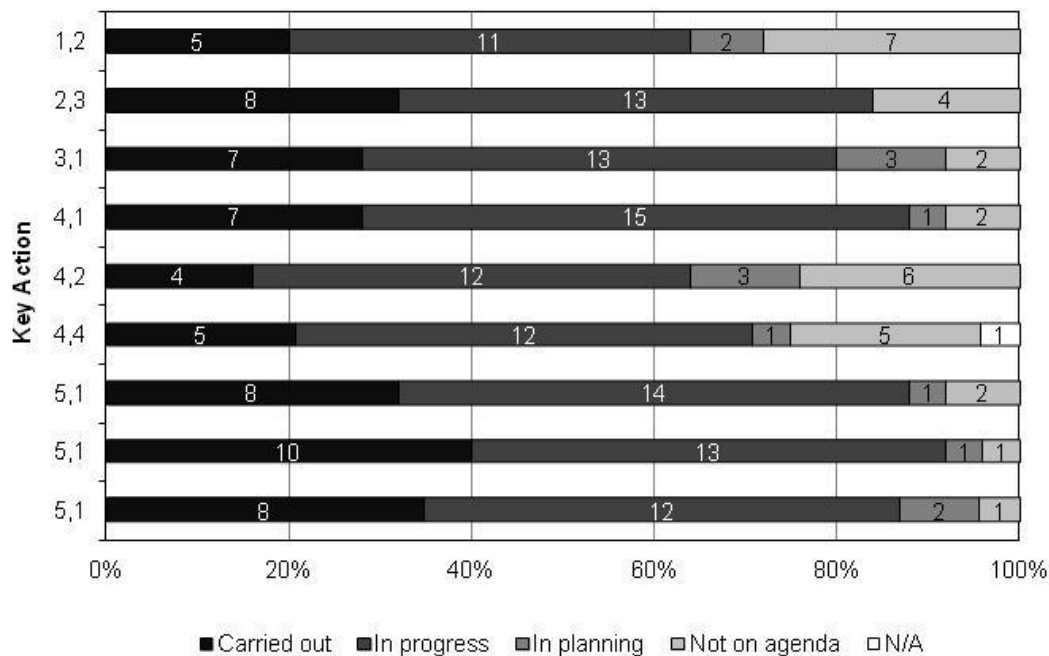


Figure 4. EU FAP Objective 1, implementation status in the Member States.

Activities where the Member States are indicated in the EU FAP Work programme 2007-2011 as Leading Actors – on their own or together with the Commission. The numbers on the vertical axis corresponds to the Key Action and activity. Response was received in the ex-post evaluation surveys from all Member States, except Belgium and Malta (N=25).

Key Action 1. Examine the effects of globalisation on the economic viability and competitiveness of EU forestry

Activity	Leading actor	Timeframe
1.1 Study on the effects of globalisation on the economic viability of EU forestry	COM	2007-2008
1.2 Conference on strengthening competitiveness of forestry	German Presidency	2007

Implementation of Key Action 1 aimed to contribute to a better understanding of globalisation and its effects, and to take into account the economic developments that have an impact on EU forestry. The **study under activity 1.1 "Study of the Effects of Globalization on the Economic Viability of EU Forestry"** was commissioned by the Commission and published in 2007 (IIASA, 2007). Following the rapidly changing economic conditions for the F-BI, there was regular reporting in 2009-2011 by the Commission about the developments in the sector to the Standing Forestry Committee (SFC) and the Advisory Group on Forestry and Cork (AGFC), along with state-of-the-play about the Action Plan for innovative and sustainable forest-based-industries (F-BI Communication, COM(2008)113). These reports have also helped to disseminate information from the Advisory Committee on Community Policy regarding Forestry and Forest-based Industries (AC-FBI) meetings. The AC-FBI has in turn collected insights from both the Commission services (e.g. on the Innovation Union flagship, Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme, Forest-based Sector Technology Platform,

Renewable Energy Directive, industrial policy and SMEs) and from key stakeholders (e.g. forest owners, woodworking industries, pulp and paper, printing, publishing).

The **conference on strengthening competitiveness of forestry (activity 1.2)** was arranged during the German presidency in 2007. In the ex-post evaluation survey of the EU FAP, a majority of Member States reported that there are activities relevant to Key Action 1, but only a few concrete examples were provided. For example, one Member State arranged a forest summit on the economic viability and competitiveness of the forest sector in 2011. This high level political event entailed broad stakeholder participation. Other follow-up activities referred to the establishment of national objectives (as part of a Strategic Programme for the Forest Sector 2011–2015) for launching and implementing change processes promoting forest sector competitiveness and renewal; an action plan for improving the competitiveness of the forest sector, as well as a dissemination project aimed at increasing competitiveness of forest sector companies. In addition to these, Member States reported research projects focused on the efficient use of environmental, economic and social potential of forests, and further analysis of the effects of globalisation on forests' economic viability and competitiveness. Results from these projects were reported as having had a carry-over effect on national forest programmes.

Follow-up through other related activities to the EU FAP Objective 1 were concerned with, for example, research and technological development (Key Action 2), mobilization and forest biomass (Key Action 5) and competitiveness of F-BI. Furthermore, parallel activities, such as the FTP conferences (e.g. 7th Conference of the FTP “*Pacing Innovation for the Bioeconomy*” in 2011), or research activities (e.g. the COST E51 final conference “*Integrating Innovation and Development Policies for the Forest Sector*” in 2010) or several FP7 financed project activities (e.g. the bio-based economy technology platforms Star-COLIBRI conference “*High-level Policy-maker Conference on Biorefineries*” in 2011) have all, to a greater or lesser extent, addressed the topic of competitiveness of the forest sector, with the aim to keep the topic on the political agenda across Europe. At the pan-European level, for example the “*European Forest Sector Outlook Study II- EFSOS II*” (UNECE/FAO, 2010) investigates the prospects of the forest sector, including aspects of the economic viability and competitiveness of forestry.

Key Action 2. Encourage research and technological development to enhance the competitiveness of the forest sector

<i>Activity</i>		<i>Leading actor</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
2.1	Support forest-based sector research and technological development	COM	2007-2011
2.2	Exploring the possibilities of better coordination and communication on forest-based sector research	COM, SFC	2007-2008
2.3	Forest-based Sector Technology Platform Strategic Research Agenda (FTP SRA)	Presidencies	2007

Key Action 2 aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of the forest sector by encouraging research and technology development (RTD). Under **activity 2.1, forest-based sector RTD** has been supported with regular exchange of information through the Inter Services Group (ISG) on forestry, SFC and AGFC. Possibilities for better **coordination and communication on forest-based sector research (activity 2.2)** have been created through implementation of the EU FAP by regular exchange of information, by presentations of research projects at SFC and AGFC meetings, and by inviting experts to the SFC ad hoc working groups. Stakeholders have been involved in the EU FAP implementation, which has indirectly contributed to the exploring of better coordination and communication on forest-based sector research. For example the recommendations from the FTP conference “*Forest Governance and the Role of Forestry Research*” in 2008 during the Slovenian presidency were presented to SFC and AGFC.

At the European level, the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) has been one of the main financing tools that supported RTD activities for the forest sector throughout 2007-2011. There

are several examples of research activities supported through FP7 financing, covering all EU FAP objectives as well as F-BI. In addition to FP7 funded projects, also ERA-NET projects and COST scientific cooperation have supported forest sector research and mobilisation of national resources for European level research. The ERA-NET supported network research programmes that have been carried out at national or regional level. It includes relevant topics, such as BiodivERsA (which includes interdisciplinary research on forest ecosystems) and WoodWisdom-NET (which works on F-BI but includes topics in the fields of forestry, wood and fibre). COST is an intergovernmental framework for European Cooperation in Science and Technology that allows for the coordination of nationally funded research on a European level. Examples of COST Actions are the actions on forest externalities (E45), innovation and development policies (E51), forest management and water cycle (FP0601), post-fire forest management (FP0701) and climate change and silviculture (FP0703), Forest Management Decision Support Systems FORSYS (FP0804), Improving Data and Information on the Potential Supply of Wood Resources: A European Approach from Multisource National Forest Inventories USEWOOD (FP1001), Impact of renewable materials in packaging for sustainability – development of renewable fibre and bio-based materials for new packaging applications (FP1003), or STReESS – Studying Tree Responses to extreme Events: a SynthesiS (FP1106). Through these scientific collaboration actions several reports have been produced, directly addressing the EU FAP objectives.

Under activity 2.3, the FTP represents one of the European Technology Platforms. It has helped to bring together technological know-how, industry, administration and financial institutions to support the European Research and Innovation Area for the forest sector. The SFC formulated its opinion on the FP7 calls in 2008, and indicated that the opinion should serve to support the FTP Strategic Research Agenda (SRA) as well as the research agendas of the Member States. The FTP Strategic Research Agenda (SRA) was adopted in 2006, and National Research Agendas (NRA) has been established in several Member States. At the stage of the ex-post evaluation of the EU FAP, the revision of the FTP Vision 2030 and SRA is underway (the most recent Revised Vision 2030 is available online since March 2012⁹). In this context, the FTP has, by building a stronger agenda to mobilise national resources and contributing to a balance between competitiveness and the other aspects of SFM, helped to mobilize EU resources for RTD. For example, through the Bio-Economy Technology Platforms' joint BECOTEPS project (concluded in 2011) it promoted the concept of Knowledge Based Bio-Economy (KBBE) and helped to achieve a more coordinated collaboration between the KBBE European Technology Platforms (ETPs). This has included presenting a "*White paper on the European Bioeconomy in 2030*" during BECOTEPS final event in 2011 (BECOTEPS, 2011).

In parallel, the Knowledge Based Bio-Economy Network (KBBE-NET) and the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) have been supporting the Commission and Member States to achieve a coordinated approach for the development and implementation of a European research policy related to the KBBE. SCAR addresses major sectors within the concept of KBBE, including the forest sector. Other forest research organisations have also been active in supporting the science-policy interplay. For example, IUFRO (the Global Network for Forest Science Cooperation) has become active in governance related activities, and the European Forest Institute (EFI) has initiated a high-level discussion and information-sharing forum "*ThinkForests*" that aims to foster a science-policy dialogue on strategic forest-related issues.

In the ex-post evaluation survey, a majority of Member States reported on activities for Key Action 2 (see Figure 4), such as studies already mentioned under Key Action 1 (e.g. a macro-economic analysis of the forestry sector in 2010). In line with the aim to support forest sector RTD, Member States reported on support to national scientific and research projects through, for example, FTP-NRA and other National Research Programmes, and dissemination activities to provide support to stakeholders and to discuss recent issues concerning the economic aspects of forestry. However, due to the economic downturn, it has been reported that some

⁹ <http://www.forestplatform.org/>

Member States have reduced their national funding for research in the forest sector in the period of 2007-2011.

The Commission proposal for the next framework programme for research and innovation “*Horizon 2020*” was published in June 2011 (COM(2011)808). Innovation, sustainable use of renewable resources and social cohesion are key elements in the EU strategic documents, *Europe 2020 – smart, sustainable and inclusive growth – initiative* (COM(2010)2020), the *Resource Efficiency Roadmap* (COM(2011)571), as well as in the *Raw Materials Initiative* (COM(2008)699) and the strategy on tackling the challenges in commodity markets and on raw materials (COM(2011)25) and *Innovating for Sustainable Growth: A Bioeconomy for Europe* (COM(2012)60).

Key Action 3. Exchange and assess experiences on the valuation and marketing of non-wood forest goods and services

Activity		Leading actor	Timeframe
3.1	Carry out studies and pilot projects on valuation, compensation and innovative marketing of non-wood forest goods and services, including methodologies	COM, MS	2007-2011
3.2	Examining ongoing activities and lessons learned on compensation for and valuation of non-wood forest goods and services, and identification of possible constraints	SFC, COM	2007-2008

Key Action 3 focuses on valuation and marketing of non-wood forest goods and services. The Commission commissioned a **study (activity 3.1)** “*FORVALUE - Study on the Development and Marketing of Non-Market Forest Products and Services*” (EFIMED et al. 2008), and the **SFC ad hoc Working Group shared member state and stakeholder activities and lessons learnt (activity 3.2)** on Valuation and Compensation Methods of Non-Wood Forest Goods and Services (NWFGS). The working group report concluded recommendations for both Member States and the Commission, and resulted in an SFC opinion on valuation and financing methods for non-wood forest goods and services (2009).

Besides the activities specified in EU FAP implementation plan, there have been several research activities ongoing on non-wood goods and services, for example the NEWFOREX project, which seeks to provide new methods for valuing forest externalities, or the COST E45 EUROFOREX Action that aimed to improve the quality standards in the valuation of externalities produced by the different types of forest in Europe. Activities have furthermore been financed with regional development resources from ERDF, such as the Sylvamed project (2010-2013), a European territorial cooperation project that facilitates innovative integration of forests environmental services into regional policies.

Most Member States reported on activities (see Figure 4) for the Key Action 3, studies and pilot projects. Activities reported include the development (and in some cases adoption) of a methodology for assessing forest ecosystem services, including the use and control of incentives for SFM in private property of individuals and legal persons and standards for valuation. Member States have also reported on follow-up projects concerned with the assessment of forest ecosystem services, as well as specific research projects such as the “*Centre of Excellence: Adaptive forest ecosystems*”; “*Development of Centre of Excellence: Adaptive forest Ecosystems*” containing elements focusing on the valuation of NWFGS; the “*UK National Ecosystem Assessment*” including an investigation into the monetary and non-monetary value to the economy, society and individuals from various ecosystem services, as well as the “*Economic analysis and performance assessment of non-wood products and functions of Lithuanian forests*” forthcoming in 2012. Other activities include a special issue on NWFGS in a magazine for economists on forest and nature valuation, and an initiative by a NFP to increase entrepreneurship based on ecotourism and further processing of natural produce, as well as the commercialization of intangible commodities.

The Commission contracted the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to do a study on “*Economic value of groundwater and biodiversity in European forests*” in 2008 (Greiber et al. 2009)¹⁰. The study includes an overview of payments for groundwater and its corresponding effects on biodiversity conservation. It also analyses the ownership and financial compensation structure for ecosystem services and developed a mechanism for establishing the economic value of ecosystem services. The ecosystem services have also been addressed in international processes, such as the UNEP Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) initiative, the UNECE/FAO Payments for Ecosystem Services workshop (July 2011) or the FAO study “*The State of Food and Agriculture 2007 – Paying Farmers For Environmental Services*” (FAO, 2007). While these are more relevant for the EU FAP Objective 2 improving and enhancing nature protection (Key Action 7), the ongoing investigations on the financing of ecosystem services is also important when considering NWFGS under the economic objective of the EU FAP.

Key Action 4. Promote the use of forest biomass for energy generation

Activity		Leading actor	Timeframe
4.1	Improve the mobilisation and efficient use of wood and wood residues, including low-value timber	SFC, COM	2007-2008
4.2	Developing cooperation methods and mechanisms between forest owners in energy markets	COM	2007
4.3	Support research and development of technologies for the production of heat, cooling, electricity and fuels from forest resources, and encourage the implementation of Strategic Research Agendas of the Forest-based Sector Technology Platform and the Biofuel Technology Platform	COM	2007-2011
4.4	Analyse how implementation of Key Action 4 is supported by rural development programmes in individual MS	COM, SFC	2011

Key Action 4 focused on the promotion of forest biomass for energy generation, including aspects of wood mobilization, cooperation and rural development. The **SFC ad hoc Working Group on Mobilisation and Efficient Use of Wood and Wood Residues for Energy Generation (activity 4.1)** completed in 2008 collected expertise and different viewpoints to discuss the factors that are relevant for wood supply, its further potential and mobilisation. On the basis of this work the SFC formulated its opinion in 2009 as a common view of the Member States. The results of the Working Group were moreover utilised by the Commission in the discussions on the Renewable Energy Directive (Directive 2009/28/EC), and for other ongoing processes and discussions, such as the pan-European framework of FOREST EUROPE and UNECE/FAO. The Working Group results were presented by the Commission for instance in the “*Workshop on Strategies for increased mobilisation of wood resources from sustainable sources*” that was arranged jointly by FOREST EUROPE (at that time the MCPFE), UNECE and the Commission in 2009. The workshop was a follow-up for January 2007 on “*Mobilizing Wood Resources - Can Europe's forests satisfy the increasing demand for raw material and energy under Sustainable Forest Management?*” arranged jointly by UNECE/FAO Timber Section, FAO Rome, Confederation of European Paper Industries CEPI, Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe MCPFE Liaison Unit Warsaw, and the Joint FAO / UNECE / ILO Expert Network.

Under **activity 4.2, on developing cooperation methods and mechanisms between forest owners in energy markets**, the Commission supported the launch of EUROFORENET or the “*European Forest Energy Network*” through ELO in 2007. These concluded (and ongoing) activities can be seen as preparatory actions for the theme; cooperation methods between forest owners have however not been developed as aimed for under activity 4.2. In parallel, the Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF) has a “*Cooperatives Working Group*” that aims to improve cooperation between forest owners to strengthen practical and economic cooperation, which may influence energy supply. It conducted a study in 2008 to provide

¹⁰ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/forests/biodiversity.htm>

insight to the existing structures of cooperation between forest owners (CEPF, 2008). CEPF also addressed the needs for wood mobilisation in Europe by developing a “*Wood Availability Action Plan*” in 2009 (CEPF, 2009).

A majority of Member States reported (see Figure 4) activities for improving the mobilisation and efficient use of wood and wood residues, including low-value wood (activity 4.1) and developing cooperation methods and mechanisms between forest owners in energy markets (activity 4.2). These activities range from the development of new legislative documents and National Biomass Action Plans, to conferences and workshops, to assessments of availability of wood and biomass, as well as to cooperation support for forest owners and infrastructure support. Often Rural Development Programmes in the Member States financed these activities.

Generally speaking, there are numerous activities that can be considered as relevant for Key Action 4, and many studies have been dedicated to the biomass potential for energy uses in Europe (and internationally). This has stimulated a broad range of follow-up activities and parallel actions that have been carried out by the Commission, Member States and other actors. The Commission has commissioned research, for example, the study on “*Real potential for changes in growth and use of EU forests - EUwood*” (Mantau et al. 2010) and on “*Financing Renewable Energy in the European Energy Market*” (De Jaeger et al. 2011). These studies provide insights into and a forecast on the supply and demand side for the future use of wood raw material from industry and for energy. The wood mobilisation issue has also been addressed in the Key Action 5, such as the Commission, FOREST EUROPE and UNECE/FAO joint publication available on the Commission forestry website “*Good practice guidance on the sustainable mobilisation of wood in Europe*” report was published in 2010 (Beck & Wall, 2010) and the study on “*Prospects for the market supply of wood and other forest products from areas with fragmented forest-ownership structures*” (BOKU, 2010). Partly as a follow-up to these studies, the Commission has in addition recently commissioned a study on wood raw materials to be finalized in 2013¹¹. This study will analyse the interrelationships between supply and demand of the wood processing sector and the energy sector. In parallel to the EU FAP, the MCPFE ad-hoc working group on sustainability criteria for forest biomass production (including bioenergy) was established in 2008 and published its final report in 2009 (MCPFE, 2009).

In 2010 the Commission adopted the report on sustainability requirements for the use of solid and gaseous biomass sources in electricity, heating and cooling (COM/2010/11). This report provided recommendations to Member States who planned to establish national sustainability rules (COM(2010)11). The recommended criteria are similar to those for biofuels and bioliquids set up in the Renewable Energy Directive. In the conclusions of this report, the Commission committed to revisiting the effectiveness of this non-binding approach by the end of 2011, and if appropriate, to propose additional EU measures. This new report is expected to be published in the near future. Also, the Renewable Energy Directive has been followed up with the preparation of National Renewable Energy Action Plans (NREAPs) as part of transposing the Directive into national legislation. Among other things, the development of an EU biomass policy has involved an assessment of the NREAPs by the Commission (including projections on biomass supply and consumption), Member States’ participated in Brussels in 2010 (e.g. closed workshops for NREAPs) and there was a public consultation in spring 2011 as regards the new report on sustainability requirements for the use of solid and gaseous biomass sources in electricity, heating and cooling. Certain environmental NGOs have criticised the Renewable Energy Directive as well as the 2010 report on biomass sustainability and argue that biomass developments may become a major destructive force for forests in Europe because there is no binding EU sustainability criteria for solid biomass similar to those for biofuels. Certain power companies also criticised the 2010 non-binding approach taken by the Commission and expressed concerns about the establishment of possible diverging national sustainability systems. During the consultation process organised in spring 2011 for

¹¹http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/wood-paper-printing/files/advisory-committee/26-10-2011/9_26-10-2011_study_on_wood_raw_material_supply_and_demand_en.pdf

revisiting this issue, most of the stakeholders supported the establishment of EU harmonised sustainability criteria for solid and gaseous biomass sources in heating and electricity.

The goal to **support for research and development of technologies (activity 4.3)** for the production of heat, cooling, electricity and fuels from forest resources and encourage the implementation of Strategic Research Agendas of the FTP and the Biofuel Technology Platform has been supported with implementation of the EU FAP Key Action 2. Research and development in the field of renewable resources has been an important topic in several financing programmes, such as the FP7, as well as in FTP and the Biofuels Technology Platform research agendas and research programmes in Member States. Forest-biomass related development projects have also been financed in territorial cooperation (ERDF), and in the Intelligent Energy Europe (IEE). The IEE programme provides targeted funding for projects aimed at clean and sustainable solutions for promoting energy efficiency and increasing the use of new and renewable energy sources, and IEE projects were presented to the SFC in 2011. Also COST actions (e.g. COST E51) have addressed forest-biomass for energy topics.

The Commission reported to the SFC on **forestry measures in the rural development programmes (activity 4.4)** in 2009. Thus the report "*Report on implementation of Forestry Measures under the Rural Development Regulation 1698/2005 for the period 2007-2013*" (AGRI H4, 2009) covered not only promoting forest biomass for energy generation related activities, but all forestry measures. The SFC concluded an opinion in 2009 about forestry measures in rural development funds, and this was utilised in preparing the next financing period in the Commission. The new rural development proposal was discussed in the SFC in several meetings in 2010-2011.

In 2011 the Commission adopted the Communication "*Energy Roadmap 2050*" in 2011 (COM(2011)885/2). This roadmap will provide a basis for developing a long-term European framework with stakeholders for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. It is crosscutting in the sense that it encourages cooperation while also focusing on security of energy supply and competitiveness. As the interest for promoting forest biomass for energy generation has increased, also concerns over potential trade-offs have been raised between the economic and environmental objectives of forestry, and between the forest adaptation and mitigation measures within the climate action – these aspects have been discussed in, for example, the commission *Green Paper on Forest Protection and Information in the EU: Preparing forests for climate change* (COM(2010)66) and related debates.

Key Action 5. Foster the cooperation between forest owners and enhance education and training in forestry

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Leading actor</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
5.1 To survey MS activities on support for: (a) vocational training and education of forest owners and forest workers; (b) development of advisory services for forest owners and their associations, and; (c) environmental awareness of forest owners and workers	SFC, COM	2008
5.2 Study on the market supply of wood and other forest products, in particular on obstacles to mobilisation due to fragmented ownership structures	COM	2009
5.3 Exchange of experiences on cooperation methods of private forest owner's organisations	SFC, COM	2009

Key Action 5 concerned the cooperation between forest owners and education and training in forestry. This Action was predominantly implemented in 2009-2011, although several Member States had relevant activities ongoing in parallel to the Action Plan. **Studies on the market supply of wood and other forest products (activity 5.2)** included the Commission study on "*Prospects for the market supply of wood and other forest products from areas with fragmented forest-ownership structures*" (BOKU, 2010), and the Commission and MCPFE joint publication "*Good practice guidance on the sustainable mobilization of wood in Europe*" (Beck

and Wall, 2010). In 2009 the study by the Confederation of the European Forest Owners (CEPF), "*European Forest Owner Organisations – Forest Owner Cooperation: Main Figures, Aims and Goals*" (CEPF, 2008) was presented to the SFC. As already referred to in the Key Action 4, there have been several studies and activities on wood mobilisation. However, the foreseen **survey to exchange experiences concerning cooperation mechanisms for private forest owners (activity 5.3)** was not implemented.

In the ex-post evaluation survey, Member States report an active implementation of the Key Action 5 activities (see Figure 5) on **vocational training; advisory services and; environmental awareness of forest owners and workers (activity 5.1)**. Several Member States reported activities on forestry training for graduate students, vocational training for forestry workers, advisory services for forest owners, conferences, national meetings, workshops and seminars for forest owners, support for forest owner cooperation and extension services and establishment of Union of Forest Owner Associations. Furthermore, also Key Action 10 on environmental education (objective 3) and Key Action 18 on information exchange and communication (objective 4) are connected with Key Action 5, and exchange of Member State practices in these respects took place in the SFC meetings. For example, the PAWSMED project on Pedagogic Work in the Forest was presented to the SFC in 2010.

Forest owner cooperation and wood mobilisation issues have also been addressed in several pan-European activities, such as the two workshops by UNECE/FAO, MCPFE and several stakeholder organizations on wood mobilisation in 2007 and 2009. Also the UNECE/FAO report on "*Private Forest Ownership in Europe*" published in 2010 (Schmithusen and Hirsch, 2010) or the report "*Potential Sustainable Wood Supply in Europe*" (UNECE/FAO, 2008) investigates same topics as the EU FAP Key Action 5.

2.3.2 Objective 2: Improve and protect the environment

Maintaining biological diversity and the resilience of EU forests to fire and the effects of climate change and are key factors in ensuring a healthy forest ecosystem, which is essential for securing the long-term productive capacity of EU forests. Over the timescale of implementing the EU Forest Action Plan several environmental issues became more prominent at both EU and Member State level, including the debate about the role of forests in combating climate change, failure to meet the EU biodiversity targets for 2010 and the need to improve monitoring of forest biodiversity and health.

The mid-term evaluation concluded that the EU FAP had provided a platform for information sharing and dialogue on Objective 2 issues but its effectiveness could be improved by fostering the link between deliberations at EU and national levels on environmental issues, particularly in support of EU contribution to international processes on climate change.

The four Key Actions under EU FAP Objective 2 aim to improve and protect the forest environment. Additionally, Member States are encouraged to use the EAFRD environmental land management support for forests and the LIFE+ instrument to achieve improvements on the ground, and also to update their protection strategies against biotic and abiotic agents. As the Figure 5 shows, in the ex-post evaluation survey the Member States report an active uptake of the Objective 2 activities, although often only few concrete examples were given.

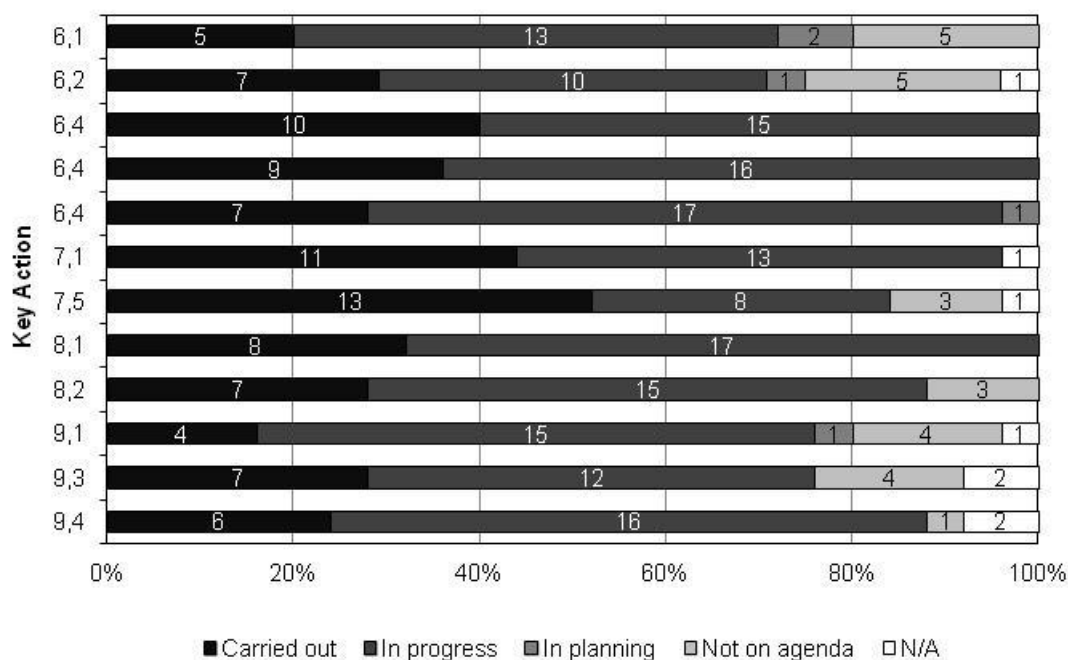


Figure 5. EU FAP Objective 2, implementation status in the Member States.

Activities where the Member States are indicated in the EU FAP Work programme 2007-2011 as Leading Actors – on their own or together with the Commission. The numbers on the vertical axis corresponds to the Key Action and activity. Response was received in the ex-post evaluation surveys from all Member States, except Belgium and Malta (N=25).

Key Action 6. Facilitate EU compliance with the obligations on climate change mitigation of the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol and encourage adaptation to the effects of climate change

Activity	Leading actor	Timeframe
6.1 Examine how to respond in a more coordinated way to the obligations of Articles 3.3 and 3.4 of the Kyoto Protocol	COM, SFC	2008-2011
6.2 Increase the effectiveness of the discussions on climate change mitigation and adaptation by facilitating exchanges between the SFC and the EU sinks experts group	COM, SFC	2007-2011
6.3 Carry out a study and other relevant scientific projects on impacts of climate change on forestry and on adaptation of forestry to climate change	COM	2007-2009
6.4 MS reporting on their activities to: (a) raise awareness on the impacts of climate change on forestry; (b) address the impacts of climate change on forestry; (c) promote climate change mitigation and adaptation	MS, COM	2009-2011

The aim of Key Action 6 is to facilitate EU compliance with international obligations on climate change mitigation, and encourage adaptation of EU forests and forestry to climate change by improving co-ordination and understanding at both EU and Member State level. After rather a slow start, **exchange of information under activities 6.1 and 6.4** improved with the establishment of the SFC ad hoc Working Group on Climate Change and Forestry in 2009, joined by 17 nominated Member States. Its final report was endorsed in 2010 and the broad dissemination of its findings was recommended. This was supported by the adoption of an SCF opinion in February 2011, including proposals for action at the EU and MS level, and three follow-up meetings were held. **Regular debriefings by the Commission to SFC on climate negotiations continued (activities 6.1 and 6.2)**, reporting on key meetings and

negotiations including the UNFCCC COP-15 in Copenhagen and the most recent COP-17 in Durban in December 2011. At EU level, parallel activities on the role of LULUCF accounting included a report in 2010 by the Commission's EUROPEAN CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRAMME EXPERT GROUP on their work, followed by the Commission's public consultation on the role of EU agriculture and forestry in achieving the EU's climate change commitments.

Efforts to **improve the joint reporting**, for example on the contribution of the agriculture and forestry sector to climate change commitments across Member States, mainly focused on briefings and discussions after relevant UNFCCC negotiations on LULUCF, reactions to expert group reports and the public consultation at EU level. The Member States provided little information on follow-up and effects at national level, although a majority stated that work was still largely in progress.

The Commission study under activity 6.3 on *Impacts of Climate Change on European Forests, and Options for Adaptation* (EFI, 2008) contributed to the discussions and recommendations of the SFC ad hoc Working Group on Climate Change and Forestry, and informed the development of the Green Paper on Forest Protection and Information (COM (2010)66). Several calls for scientific projects under the 7th Research Framework Programme addressed the risks to forests from climate change and the adaptation of the sector. This resulted in relevant FP7 projects such as *Biodiversity and Climate Change, a Risk Analysis* (BACCARA)¹², *Increasing Sustainability of European Forests: Modelling for Security against invasive pests and pathogens under climate change* (ISEFOR)¹³ and *Models for adaptive forest management* (MOTIVE)¹⁴.

Member States continued to report a variety of climate change work under activity 6.4, with all 25 responding Member States having work in progress or already carried out, although the level of activity still differs considerably between countries. Examples include adaptation strategies and action plans, setting up an expert network and advisory concept, studies and active participation in research projects at national and EU levels. Stakeholders also carried out a range of information campaigns and activities for different interest groups, such as the Committee of the Regions own-initiative opinion in 2009 Towards an EU Forest Policy with a particular focus on the 20/20/20 targets; and the FERN study *Flows of Biomass to and from the EU, an analysis of data and trends* (Hewitt, 2011). In general, Member States and stakeholders in Eastern Europe reported rather different communication activities under Key Action 6, focusing mainly on their participation in the AGFC and the ad hoc SFC working group on climate change and forestry.

Key Action 7. Contribute towards achieving the revised Community biodiversity objectives for 2010 and beyond

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Leading actor</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
7.1 Exchange experiences on implementation of Natura 2000 in forest areas	SFC, COM	2008-2009
7.2 Consider forest biodiversity reporting and monitoring in the framework of the SEBI system of EU biodiversity indicators	COM, SFC	2007-2009
7.3 Consider monitoring of the fragmentation of forests and of the effects of forest expansion on biodiversity	COM, SFC	2008-2010
7.4 Follow developments in CBD and other international fora regarding forest biodiversity	SFC, COM	2007-2011
7.5 Periodically organise joint meetings of the EU Forest and Nature Directors and promote active participation by forest administrations in informal exchanges between MS on implementation of nature protection legislation in the EU	COM	2007-2011

¹² http://www.baccara-project.eu/file/BACCARA_Leaflet.pdf

¹³ <http://www.isefor.com/index.php>

¹⁴ <http://motive-project.net/>

It became clear during implementation of the Action Plan that the EU would not achieve the objective which Key Action 7 was aimed to support – the EU 2010 biodiversity target – and in 2011 new biodiversity targets were set for 2020 (COM(2011)244), see Chapter 2. The Commission led the work on the post-2010 biodiversity strategy and target, keeping the SFC informed.

An exchange of information on Member States' experience of forest nature conservation and their implementation of Natura 2000 (activity 7.1) took place through SFC meetings, resulting in a synthesis report but covering the experience of just 11 Member States. In the ex-post evaluation survey, a wide range of Member States reported that information exchange activities (see Figure 5), but only few concrete examples were provided. These mostly referred to joint declarations and meetings across different ministries and regional authorities, more extensive programmes to inform landowners about the conservation of valuable forests, and research on the effectiveness of nature conservation measures in forests. At the same time, several reports were released addressing the financing of the Natura 2000 network (IEEP et al, 2010; IEEP et al. 2011a; IEEP et al. 2011b) and resulted into the development of a staff-working document on the future financing of the network (SEC(2011) 1573 final). There is no indication whether this topic was discussed in SFC or AGFC meetings in 2011, but the 2009 *Opinion of the SFC on Forestry Measures in Rural Development* and the Commission's report on RDP implementation which preceded it both covered the use by Member States of EAFRD support for forest-environment and Natura 2000 measures; at least one Member State also reported about the national uptake of such payments. In parallel, new guidelines are expected to be published on the management of forest Natura 2000 sites.

The SEBI initiative, launched in 2005 and aimed to develop a European set of biodiversity indicators to assess progress towards the 2010 targets, had been discussed several times by the SFC. **Activity 7.2 on forest biodiversity reporting and monitoring** was implemented as the Commission kept the SFC informed about work that built upon SEBI, including the development of a 2010 baseline for the new targets and the establishment of the Biodiversity Information System for Europe (BISE), a collaborative IT tool that will be a single entry point for data and information on biodiversity in the EU. The SFC was also kept informed (**activity 7.4) of forest-related developments under the international Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** process in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010.

Several activities by the Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) and the European Environment Agency (EEA) contributed to **monitoring forest fragmentation (activity 7.3)** and other impacts on forest biodiversity. A methodology was proposed (Estreguil and Mouton, 2009) to implement two headline biodiversity indicators, the *fragmentation and connectivity of ecosystem*¹⁵ and *landscape level forest spatial pattern*¹⁶ (Estreguil and Mouton, 2009), JRC provided high-resolution forest/non-forest maps to address the issue of forest area changes and forest fragmentation in the EU, and parallel studies addressed the mapping of ecosystem services, including timber production (Maes et al, 2011). In parallel, EEA published several important reports on forest biodiversity and ecosystem services, from the initial study "*European forests – ecosystem conditions and sustainable use*" (EEA, 2008) to "*Ten messages for 2010 – Forest ecosystems*" (EEA, 2010a) which identified unsustainable forest management, fragmentation, airborne pollution and climate change as the major threats to Europe's forest biodiversity; the assessment of The European Environment – State and Outlook 2010 (EEA, 2010b)¹⁷ noted that forests are crucial for biodiversity and ecosystem service delivery, but are heavily exploited and the share of old-growth forest in the EU is critically low. A new EEA report on the multi-functionality of forests and the role of forests in sustainable development is expected in 2012. In 2008 the Commission launched a study of "*Undisturbed forests in Europe: concept, assessment and guidelines*", and the interim results were presented at an SFC meeting in 2009.

¹⁵ EEA/SEBI 2010 Indicator 13

¹⁶ MCPFE 4.7 Indicator

¹⁷ <http://www.eea.europa.eu/soer/>

The Member States' **Nature Directors held periodic meetings (activity 7.5)** and discussed, for example, climate change and forestry at a 2008 meeting in Slovenia; separately a 2009 meeting of Forest Directors in Sweden discussed trade-offs between climate change mitigation and biodiversity. There was an informal meeting of both Nature Directors and Forest Directors in Belgium in 2010, which discussed issues around biodiversity and forests, and also the role of forests in climate change adaptation. In the survey for this evaluation only two Member States referred to their participation in such meetings. During the 2007 to 2009 period the informal, voluntary network of Member State practitioners in nature conservation and forestry GreenForce provided several opportunities to share experiences of practical implementation of nature conservation and forestry laws (activity 7.5). GreenForce held two expert meetings and one plenary meeting in 2007, three expert meetings in 2008, the most recent expert meeting and a Regional co-operation Networking Project meeting in 2009.

Looking ahead, the new 2020 Strategy requires action by Member States to 'integrate biodiversity measures in forest management plans' and specifies maintaining optimal levels of deadwood, preserving forest wilderness areas, ecosystem-based measures to increase fire resilience, measures for Natura 2000 forest sites, and ensuring that afforestation is carried out in accordance with the Pan-European Operational Level Guidelines for SFM¹⁸. The need for such measures is reflected in key biodiversity indicators such as the lack of sufficient deadwood and older trees and the proportion of non-native species and of evenly structured forests (EEA, 2010c and 2010d). The ex-post evaluation surveys provided some information on the extent to which NFPs already address biodiversity issues, and the responses present a rather heterogenic picture. A majority of responding Member States replied that although not directly addressed, forest biodiversity is either covered indirectly by general measures on sustainable forest management provided in NFPs (e.g. functional zoning of forests) or addressed by other policy instruments (e.g. policy baselines for forest sectors) often related to implementation of nature conservation policies and legislation. A few clearly indicated that at least one or two issues were specifically covered under their NFP (e.g. a Forestry Standard and guidelines as a key element of the NFP), and another refers to detailed guidelines applied in the context of its RDP scheme for afforestation of farmland.

Key Action 8. Work towards a European Forest Monitoring System

Activity	Leading actor	Timeframe
8.1 Further elaborating a European Forest Monitoring System	MS, COM	2007-2011
8.2 Establishing a European Forest Data Centre	COM	2007-2011

The context for KA8 is the replacement after 2006 of obligatory forest monitoring under the Forest Focus Regulation by a project-based system supported under the LIFE+ programme for 2007-2013. This allowed the continuation of the monitoring activities in certain Member States on the basis of voluntary approach. The 2010 Green Paper on forest protection and information launched a discussion on forest information and monitoring in Europe after 2013.

At the mid-term evaluation in 2009 the impact of EU FAP on the **development of a European Forest Monitoring System (activity 8.1)** was considered to be modest. The publication of the Commission White Paper on Adapting to Climate Change in 2009 (COM(2009)147) opened a debate at EU level on forest protection and forest information systems, supported by several initiatives to improve the knowledge base relating to forest information (for these, see activity 9.4 under Key Action 9 below). In the light of this communication and a number of studies carried out on forest protection¹⁹, the Commission published the *Green Paper on forest protection and information – preparing forests for climate change* (COM(2010)66) and an accompanying staff working document with background information (SEC(2010)163) in March

¹⁸ <http://www.foresteurope.org/>

¹⁹ Such as the Feasibility Study on means of combating forest dieback in the European Union (2007), Implementation of the EU Forestry Strategy: How to protect EU forests against harmful impacts (2009), for further information see <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/forests/studies.htm>

2010. The purpose of the Green Paper was to engage stakeholders in a debate on the EU's approach to forest protection and information in the context of the likely impact from climate change to and contribute to the debate about options for a future forestry strategy. Relating to Key Actions 8 and 9, the Green Paper presents an overview of emerging challenges to EU forests as a result of increased competition for wood resources and climate change and observes serious gaps in pan-European data on forest damage, monitoring of pest outbreaks and GHG balances in forestry operations and their impact on forest biodiversity in particular. The paper underlined both this considerably changed policy context and the related need for a more harmonized, reliable and comprehensive information on forests, the basis of which should be a more complete set of indicators relating to policy issues of forest use, forest functions and forest protection.

The Council Conclusions on the Green Paper, published in June 2010, reiterated the shortcomings of existing policies and instruments at national and EU level, called for evaluation of current elements of forest information and monitoring, and underlined the need to further develop an EU forest monitoring and information system, whilst giving appropriate attention to existing structures and processes. The outcome of the public consultation on the Green Paper showed that the need to address forest information at EU level was the most consensual issue in the Green Paper, and it had the support of the majority of respondents. The stakeholders also emphasised as very important the need to establish EU forest monitoring systems with a clear link to key policy issues. As follow-up, the European Parliament requested in their Resolution on the Commission Green Paper (European Parliament, 2010) that the long-term national forest programmes should better incorporate measurable targets and evaluation criteria that take into account the increased threats to forests from climate change. In this context, the Parliament requested the Commission to present a legislative proposal on forest information, with a view to considerably improve the collection and dissemination of relevant, harmonised and comparable data on forest cover, biodiversity, biotic and abiotic threats and land use in the context of the UNFCCC, CBD and environmental accounts.

In August 2010, following the publication in March 2010 of the Green Paper on forest protection and information (COM(2010)66), the Commission reported to the European Parliament and Council on the implementation of the expired Forest Focus scheme (COM(2010)430), concluding that: the intensive monitoring network (Level II) had not provided enough information on the state of EU forests, and in the future additional indicators should be included, using networks that provide consistent information at EU level; and forest soil and biodiversity monitoring should be continued because they deliver crucial information for EU policy making and international conventions, such as UNFCCC and CBD. In contrast, the initial reasons for EU monitoring of forest crown condition have become largely obsolete.

In 2010 the SFC set up an ad hoc working group in order to examine the issues outlined by the Green Paper in the field of forest information and monitoring. The group was established in February 2011 with a task to review the state of forest information systems in the EU, compile a list of relevant forest information parameters that are linked to EU policies affecting the forest sector, and focus on how the actual state of forest information can be improved. The ad hoc working groups final report "Forest information needs, required resources, ways and means" published in March 2012 summarise the findings, discussed options for co-operation in the field of forest information and monitoring, and proposed and evaluated three approaches – voluntary, legislative and multilateral (the latter based on utilisation of information under multilateral international agreements to which EU or Member States are a party). The conclusions underlined the need for a long-term approach to integration and harmonisation of forest information to allow gradual reduction in the heterogeneity of existing forest information systems and improvement in their coverage and robustness. In addition it was thought that consistency and comparability of information stemming from a number of sectoral EU forest-related policies merit being a high priority in the absence of common EU forest policy.

The European Commission (JRC) is responsible for implementing **activity 8.2, the development of the European Forest Data Centre (EFDAC)** which, together with the European Soil Data Centre, is an integral part of the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS). EFDAC was established in 2009 with the aim of becoming a single forest information point for Europe, including data on forest fires (from the European Forest Fire Information System), forest extent, forest fragmentation, and data on forest condition (from the Forest Focus Data Platform). Many Member States provided National Forest Inventory data, and other European data is also linked to the system, such as that from Forest Europe.

Key Action 9. Enhance the protection of EU forests

Activity		Leading actor	Timeframe
9.1	Further develop the European Forest Fire Information System	COM, MS	2007-2011
9.2	Carry out a study analysing main factors influencing the evolution of forest condition in Europe (including forest fires), the efficiency of current Community instruments and measures for forest protection	COM	2007-2011
9.3	Form groupings of MS to study particular regional problems with the condition of forests	MS	2007-2010
9.4	Support research on protection of forests and phytosanitary issues	MS, COM	2007, 2009

The target of Key Action 9 is to enhance protection of EU forests by, for example, improving the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS), supporting exchange of experiences between Member States, as well as supporting research projects and studies.

The European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS) was originally developed by JRC and Commission services in 2000, and is an information system providing data on active fires, perimeter of burned areas and analysis of fire damage, updated daily. The **further development of EFFIS (activity 9.1)** began with discussion of new EFFIS modules, based on a request by the Member States, followed by developments launched in 2008 and 2009 and fully implemented in 2011. Regular progress was made to reports to SFC on developing EFDAC and EFFIS to SFC most recently in December 2011, when JRC presented a survey of up-to-date activities. The database now reflects the efforts of the 22 contributing countries that have been regularly supplying fire data (20 EU Member States²⁰ plus Switzerland and Turkey) and contains over 2 million individual wildfire event records, of which about 1.66 million are classified as forest fires (San-Miguel-Ayanz, et al, 2012). An agreement has been established with the FAO for the extension of the system to North African and near-East Mediterranean countries in 2011.

A number of Commission funded **research projects on forest protection (activities 9.2 and 9.4)** extended the evidence base before (and since) the publication of the Green Paper (see above):

- at the request of the European Parliament, a study of the main causes of forest dieback damage in the EU, focusing specifically on fires and atmospheric pollution and at the ways of reducing their occurrence (Requardt, et al. 2007);
- a study of the potentially harmful environmental impacts on EU forests, and policy options to address these. Three scenarios were outlined, from a Forest Framework Directive (to maintain and restore to 'good status' all forests in the EU, and make them resilient against harmful impacts by 2030) to a less contentious policy for selected issues protection only (Winkel, et al. 2009);
- a study analysing and classifying destructive storms in EU forests (Gardiner et al, 2010), to be followed in 2012 by a practical tool-book on living with storms; and
- a study of current and future disturbances of EU forests caused by biotic agents, including harmful insects, fungal and nematode diseases as well as wild animals.

²⁰ Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden

In parallel a wide range of research studies relevant to forest protection were supported by other EU funds, in particular FP7 and LIFE+, and some Member States undertook nationally funded research too. Under activity 9.3 a total of 19 Member States reported involvement in co-operation on regional problems of forest condition, in several cases supported by Regional Development Funds (ERDF), sometimes also as international projects under territorial cooperation.

2.3.3 Objective 3: Contributing to quality of life

Activities implemented under the EU FAP Objective 3 concern the social and cultural aspects of forests, including forest education, protective function of forests and urban forestry. Most activities under Objective 3 were planned for the latter part of the implementation period (2010-2011). The mid-term evaluation of the EU FAP concluded in 2009 that the Commission and Member States could utilise the mid-term as a point to check the focus of this Objective and possibly prioritise its actions, at the same time clarifying the relationship of the activities with the Forest Communicators Network, and making use of the study on public perceptions of EU forests (Key Action 18) and the report on forestry measures in the Rural Development Programmes (Key Action 4).

As highlighted by Objective 3, forests contribute to improving European citizens' quality of life. However, in recent years, forests have rather been on the political agenda because of several natural disasters affecting European forests between 2007 and 2011, ranging from severe windstorms, extreme forest fires and devastating floods in different parts of Europe. Also the International Year of Forests in 2011 provided a framework that allowed Member States to communicate about European forests, including the aspect of environmental education.

As the Figure 6 shows, there has been a good uptake of the Objective 3 activities in the Member States. More or less all responding Member States report activities in environmental education (Key Action 10) and protective functions of forests (Key Action 11), whereas activities related to urban and peri-urban forests (Key Action 12) are not necessarily in the agenda in all countries.

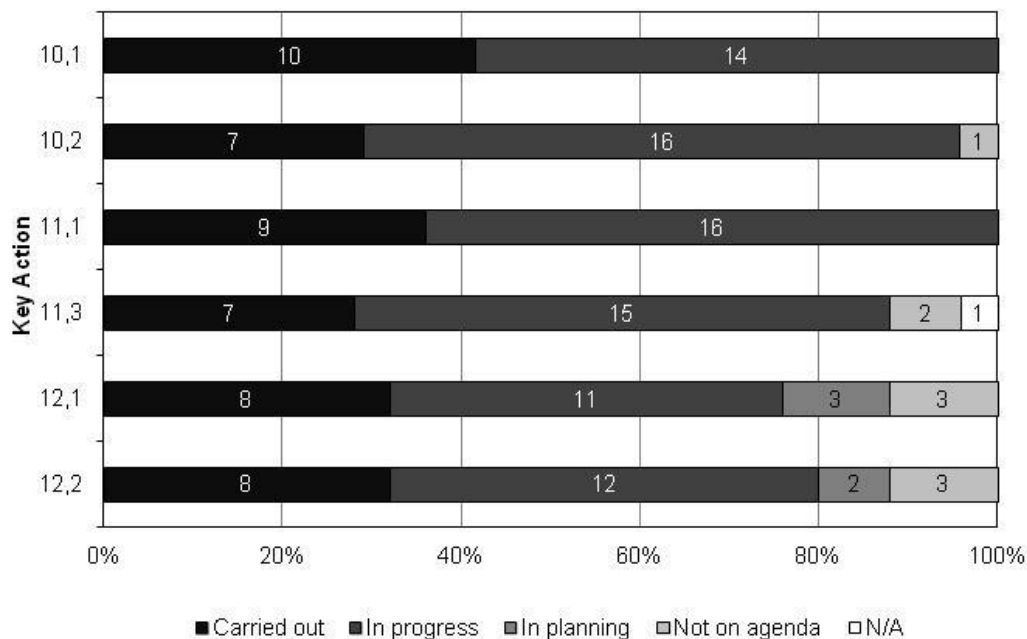


Figure 6. EU FAP Objective 3, implementation status in the Member States.

Activities where the Member States are indicated in the EU FAP Work programme 2007-2011 as Leading Actors – on their own or together with the Commission. The numbers on the vertical axis

corresponds to the Key Action and activity. Response was received in the ex-post evaluation surveys from all Member States, except Belgium and Malta (N=25).

Key Action 10. Encourage environmental education and information

<i>Activity</i>		<i>Leading actor</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
10.1	Exchange experience between MS on environmental education and information campaigns	SFC, COM	2008
10.2	Review activities of MS in promoting education on sustainable forest management	SFC, COM	2010

The target of Key Action 10 is to raise awareness in society about Sustainable Forest Management and to allow society to better appreciate the contribution of Sustainable Forest Management to the quality of life through exchange of experiences among Member States.

The **exchange of experiences between Member States on environmental education and information campaigns (activity 10.1)** builds on the work of UNECE/FAO Team of Specialists “Forest Communicators Network” (FCN) and it aimed at exchanging views within the Standing Forestry Committee (SFC) and the Advisory Group on Forestry and Cork (AGFC). Austria invited other Member States to designate representatives for the **implementation of the environmental education and information (activity 10.2)**. The kickoff meeting was held in Vienna in February 2007 and the second meeting took place in Vienna in January 2008. Both meetings stressed the cooperation between Member States and the FCN. Specific initiatives, programmes and projects were discussed during three SFC meetings in 2009, 2010 and 2011, and it was concluded that there is a clear added value in providing periodic reviews of Key Action 10 in the Committee.

All Member States answering to the evaluation surveys report ongoing activities at national and sub-national levels, some of them already for several years or even decades. As such they are not necessarily directly triggered by the EU FAP, but they show the diversity of activities ongoing across the EU. The Member States report educational activities as an important objective of their National Forest Programmes. There are also examples how these activities and national education programmes were supported jointly by several ministries or public bodies at the national level: some Member States have set up a special support programme for forest pedagogy within their Rural Development Programme; in one country the Forest and Nature Agencies participate every year in the “Get Moving” programme of the National Board of Health; and in one country Ministries of Agriculture and Education jointly co-fund an annual campaign for primary schools. Furthermore, one Member State has organised a national conference on the role of their forests within a European and international context. Future communication and education strategies were also discussed in the SFC ad hoc working group on EU forest communication strategy (Key Action 18), and the UN International Year of Forests 2011, resulting in active participation in visibility events in the Member States, appears as a very positive catalyst for education and information activities regarding forests across Europe.

Key Action 11. Maintain and enhance the protective functions of forests

<i>Activity</i>		<i>Leading actor</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
11.1	Exchange experiences on measures taken to enhance the protective function of forests	SFC, COM	2009
11.2	Carry out studies on: Flood prevention; Combating desertification; Avalanche control; Soil erosion prevention and control; Water resources preservation	COM	2009-2011
11.3	Natural hazard prevention	COM, MS	2010/ 2011

The target of Key Action 11 is to enhance the protective function of forests through exchange of experiences between Member States, carrying out studies, and strengthen prevention policies.

Experiences on measures taken to enhance the protective function of forests (activity 11.1) were discussed by SFC in 2009, and indirectly several times during the deliberations on the Green Paper on Forest Protection and Information in Europe. Forest natural disasters were discussed twice and forest fires specifically once by SFC in 2009 and 2011. Also the Advisory Group on Forestry and Cork (AGFC) addressed the issue and concluded a joint resolution on forest fires and EU solidarity funds for natural disasters (2007) and revised it in 2009 to include other forest disasters.

During 2007-2011 there was attention to forests, for example, due to forest fires in Greece (2007, 2009), Spain and Portugal (2009), as well as the windstorms such as Klaus over large parts of central and southern France, Spain and parts of Italy (2009), floods in England (2007) and Italy (2009). For example, the EEA report no. 13/2010 *Mapping the impacts of natural hazards and technological accidents in Europe* has given an overview of the evolution of natural disasters in Europe during the last decade, stressing the importance of prevention, training and insurance mechanisms.

Two Commission communications on **nature hazard prevention (activity 11.3)** were issued: *Reinforcing the Union's Disaster Response Capacity*, (COM(2008)130) and *A Community approach on the prevention of natural and man-made disasters* (COM(2009)82), along with discussions at the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. Based on the Commission's Communications, the Council adopted draft conclusions on the prevention of forest fires in Europe, which have been integrated in internal policy processes by several Commission Services, many of which are still ongoing. The Commission is currently developing a follow-up programme on best practices in natural risk analysis and management. *A Forest Europe workshop: Assessment of Forest Fire Risks and Innovative Strategies for Fire Prevention* was organised in Rhodes in May 2010 to sum up the work of the Commission expert working group on the prevention of forest fires. (see also Key Action 9). Also other **studies, reports and workshops (activity 11.2)** have been conducted by different Commission Services, such as the Directorate General for Environment²¹: *Destructive storms in EU forests: past and forthcoming impacts* (Gardiner et al. 2010), *EU policy options for the protection of European forests against harmful impacts* (IFP and Ecologic, 2009), and EEA reports, *2010 Soil Assessment*²² and *Europe's forests at a glance* (2011). As these illustrate, Key Action 11 is closely connected to Objective 2 activities (see Key Actions 8 and 9) and the deliberations on the Green Paper on forest protection and information (COM(2010)66).

In parallel, the 7th Framework Programme for research and innovation (FP7) has addressed forest-related natural hazards through various research calls (five in 2007, five in 2008, three in 2009, two in 2010, five in 2011, and two in 2012), representing overall a significant effort on research and knowledge transfer. This effort is complemented by several COST actions on the protective functions of forests: desert restoration, forests and water, and post-fire management. The Joint Research Centre of the European Commission has several ongoing and permanent programmes on natural and forest-related disasters, including one on desertification, land degradation and draught, and one on floods.

In the ex-post evaluation surveys all responding Member States report activities regarding the protective functions of forests, most of them emerging from the National Forest Programmes or funded through Rural Development or Regional Development instruments. For example the following activities are reported: implementation of anti-erosive afforestations and afforestation on burned-down areas; Rural Development funding available for protection forests; set-up and development of Integral Prevention of forest fire brigades; new Forest Act including a proposal to establish a forest protection service within the forest administration; national forest sector action plan in case of storm-hazard, and; forest protection measures in 2009-2013 against bark beetle outbreaks. At regional level, many local authorities have developed prevention and coordination actions to conserve and improve forests' protective functions through the use of the European Regional Development Fund with for example the creation of a European forest

²¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/forests/studies.htm>

²² <http://www.eea.europa.eu/soer/europe/soil>

fire network (EUFOFINET), or exchanges of experiences on how to help European forests adapt to climate change (Future Forest).

Key Action 12. Explore the potential of urban and peri-urban forests

Activity		Leading actor	Timeframe
12.1	Review and integrate methodologies for evaluating the social and human impacts of urban and peri-urban forests	COM, SFC	2008-2010
12.2	Explore structures to engage local communities and non-traditional stakeholders in planning, creating, managing and using urban and peri-urban forests	SFC, COM	2009 / 2010

The target of Key Action 12 is to explore the potential of urban and peri-urban forests in providing amenity values, recreational and preventive healthcare services for European citizens.

A workshop on experience sharing related to urban and peri-urban forests was arranged in co-operation between the Commission and the UK Forestry Commission in January 2011 in Brussels. It addressed both the issue of **reviewing and integrating methodologies for evaluating the social and human impacts of urban and peri-urban forests, and structures to engage local communities and non-traditional stakeholders in planning, creating, managing and using urban and peri-urban forests (activities 12.1 and 12.2)**. The SFC had a follow-up discussion in February 2011 and recommended that the conclusions ought to be considered for the review of the EU Forestry Strategy.

Most activities related to urban and peri-urban forests in Europe run in parallel to the EU FAP. These include an annual meeting of the European Forum on Urban Forestry, and a FAO subgroup, which created in 2011 a specific working group for the Mediterranean. The EEA published in 2011 "*Forest health and climate change*"²³ explaining the positive influence of urban forests on human health.

A majority of Member States report national activities, such as engaging local communities in planning and adoption of forestry plan management; support of the Forest Service to manage urban and peri-urban forests for city authorities; joint planning for regional urban forests; a manual for Local Authorities "Amenity Trees and Woodlands", a "Neighbourhood Scheme" for establishment of urban and peri-urban forests; studies on recreational uses and welfare effects of forests; monitoring of carrying capacity on forest recreation areas and inventory of objects of Cultural Heritage in forests, and; a national inventory of forests with high social values.

2.3.4 Objective 4: Fostering coordination and communication

Activities in the EU FAP Objective 4 are coordination and communication measures designed for the whole duration of the implementation period (except Key Action 15, see below). In the mid-term evaluation, it was concluded that although the Action Plan provides means for information-sharing and communication, the EU FAP implementation should be strengthened by follow-up and monitoring of the activities, stronger connection between the EU level action plan and the National Forest Programmes as well as measures to ensure extensive communication of the EU FAP activities and results also beyond those directly involved in the Action Plan implementation.

As Figure 7 shows, the Member States participate actively in EU level (SFC work and the EU Forest Directors meetings, Key Action 13) and international forest-related processes (Key Action 16), and play an active role in communication measures (visibility events and awareness-raising, Key Action 18); more or less all 25 Member States report activities in these Key Actions in the ex-post evaluation surveys. In addition to these, Objective 4 also includes

²³ <http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/forests-health-and-climate-change>

Actions mainly focusing at the EU level (Key Action 14 about coordination between policy areas in the Commission, and Key Action 15 open method of coordination to national forest programmes), see following detailed descriptions.

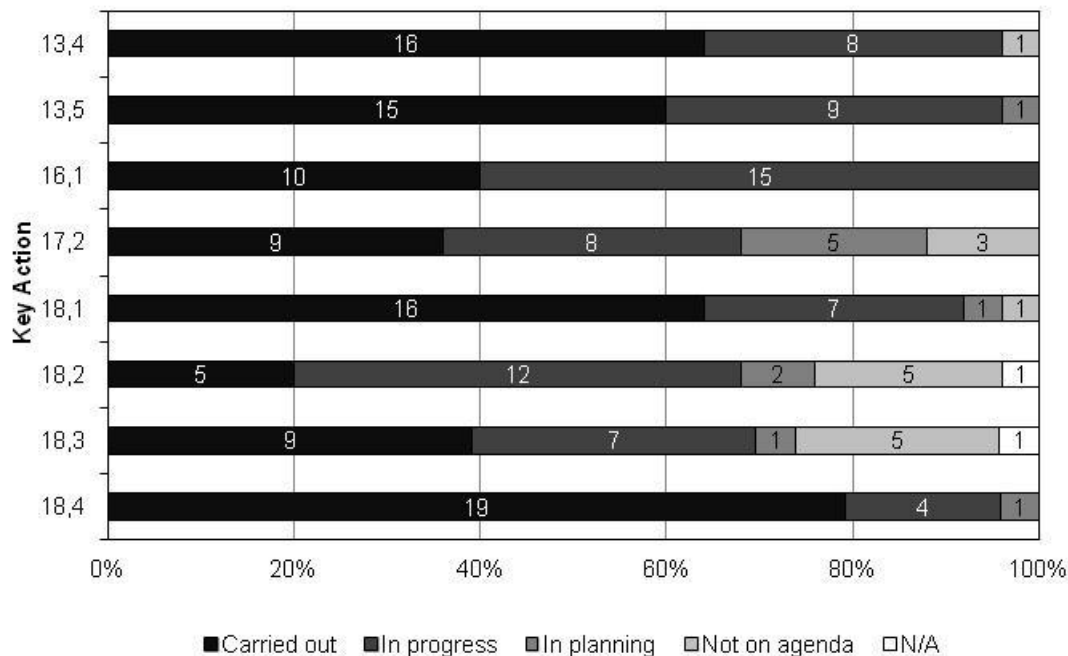


Figure 7. EU FAP Objective 4, implementation status in the Member States.

Activities where the Member States are indicated in the EU FAP Work programme 2007-2011 as Leading Actors – on their own or together with the Commission. The numbers on the vertical axis corresponds to the Key Action and activity. Response was received in the ex-post evaluation surveys from all Member States, except Belgium and Malta (N=25).

Key Action 13. Strengthen the role of the Standing Forestry Committee

Activity	Leading actor	Timeframe
13.1 Establish yearly work programmes for the Standing Forestry Committee	COM, SFC	2006-2010
13.2 Organise joint meetings between the members of the SFC and the AGFC, and with the Advisory Committee on Community Policy regarding Forestry and Forest-based Industries	COM	2007-2011
13.3 Strengthen the active involvement of the SFC in its advisory role in policy formulation and implementation processes	COM	2007-2011
13.4 Adjust the working methods of the SFC by making use of ad hoc working groups	COM	2007-2011
13.5 Regularly organise meetings of the EU Forest Directors	MS	2007-2011

The target of Key Action 13 and strengthening of the role of the Standing Forestry Committee (SFC) is to improve coordination and communication at multiple organisational and institutional levels: between Member States and between the Commission and Member States. The EU FAP has provided a structure and framework for the work of the SFC in 2007-2011 with the measures described below.

The SFC yearly programmes have been compiled based on the **working programme of the EU FAP 2007-2011 (activity 13.1)**. Annual programmes have been drafted by the Commission, and finalised in the SFC. The working programme has to an extent also structured monitoring and reporting of the EU FAP implementation, especially due to the evaluation built in the work programme at mid-term and ex-post (Key Action 19). After the mid-

term evaluation report (2009) the Commission has given detailed regular state-of-the-play reports on the implementation to both Member States in the SFC and stakeholders in the Advisory Group on Forestry and Cork (AGFC) meetings.

One **joint meeting of AGFC and SFC (activity 13.2)** was arranged: a workshop for the review of the Forestry Strategy in April 2011. The workshop report is available on the internet²⁴. Instead of the several joint meetings foreseen between Member States and stakeholders in the work programme for 2007-2011, the information flow between AGFC and SFC has been strengthened by AGFC chair participating in the SFC meetings. Furthermore, there has been stakeholder members nominated in the SFC ad hoc working groups (normally three stakeholder members from AGFC, although for the Working Group on the new Forest Strategy, due to high interest from stakeholders, this number was duplicated).

Strengthening of the SFC in its advisory role in policy formulation and the implementation process has been achieved through **joint Member State opinions (activity 13.3)**. SFC has concluded opinions on research (2008), rural development programmes, non-wood forest goods and services, and wood mobilisation (2009), and climate change (2011) – the three last mentioned were based on the SFC ad hoc working groups. These opinions include actions proposed both for Community level, basically for the Commission, and for the Member States to take. There has not been specific reporting agreed on follow-up of the proposed actions, but the EU FAP evaluations at mid-term and ex-post can provide a momentum for reflection.

SFC ad hoc working groups (activity 13.4) have been utilised throughout the whole Action Plan period 2007-2011, in principle two working groups in parallel. In total seven ad hoc working groups have gathered technical expertise from the Member States and stakeholders on: non-wood forest goods and services (Key Action 3), wood mobilisation and use of residues for energy (Key Action 4), climate change and forests (Key Action 6), public procurement of wood and wood-based products (Key Action 17), forest communication (Key Action 18), and in 2011-2012 on forest monitoring and information (Key Action 8), and the future forestry strategy (Key Action 19). At the stage of the ex-post evaluation, five working groups have completed their work in a report and recommendations publicised on the internet²⁵. All in all, there has been active participation in the SFC meetings, on an average some 22-23 Member States per meeting (app. five meetings each year during 2007-2011), and some 15 Member States nominating their expert in each SFC ad hoc working group.

The Forest Directors meetings (activity 13.5) have been arranged by the Member States – in principle twice a year, connected with the EU Presidency events, sometimes together or back-to-back with the Nature Directors meeting (e.g. “Forestry for climate and biodiversity” in 2011 in Poland and 2010 in Belgium). Often also stakeholders and Commission representatives have been invited to these meetings to present the stakeholder viewpoints and to give an update for EU level processes and developments in forestry (e.g. Hungary in 2010, Sweden in 2009). Under the auspices of the EU Presidency several conferences and expert meetings have also been arranged which have addressed the EU FAP themes, such as: Forest protection in Europe (Spain 2010); Future forest monitoring in the EU (Sweden 2009); Forest communication (Czech Republic 2009); Forest-Based Sector – Bio-Responses to the New Climate and Energy Challenges (France 2008). These activities are not reported in the Commission state-of-the-play reports on EU FAP implementation, but they have been arranged in the Member States during the presidencies by several organisations.

²⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/fore/publi/index_en.htm

²⁵ <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/fore/>

Key Action 14. Strengthen coordination between policy areas in forest-related matters

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Leading actor</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
14.1 Appoint a co-ordinator for forest-related policies in each relevant Directorate-General	COM	2007
14.2 Regularly inform the SFC of the initiatives and actions in different policy areas that are of relevance to the work of the Committee	COM	2007-2011
14.3 Strengthen the role of the Inter-Service Group on Forestry	COM	2007-2011

The target of Key Action 14 is to contribute to improved coordination across policy areas within the Commission. The EU FAP and its work programme have provided a structure and framework for work in 2007-2011 within Commission, in addition to ordinary inter-services' consultations and communication.

The inter-services group on Forestry (ISGF) was established in 2001 to improve coordination within the Commission on forest related issues. The inter-services groups are Commission internal bodies, thus information on their meetings is regulated by Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 on public access to EU documents. The **ISGF has periodic meetings (activity 14.3)** on invitation by the Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development. In 2007-2008 the group met three to four times per year, and in 2009-2011 five to seven times per year. In 2011 the ISGF contact list includes 16 Directorate Generals and the Secretariat General (e.g. the list of contact persons for forest-related policies in relevant Commission departments), and some five to six Directorate Generals have participated in more or less all of the ISGF meetings. The annual SFC work programmes are prepared in ISGF, and major issues on the agenda during 2009-2011 have been RES related issues, Green Paper on forest protection and information, new rural development regulation, and MCPFE / Forest Europe ministerial conference preparations as well as the Forest Europe legally-binding agreement (LBA) process.

The **list of contact persons for forest-related policies in each relevant Directorate General (activity 14.1)** was presented to SFC in May 2007. The list of contact persons does not provide details such as tasks or description of field of operation with respect to forests or forestry. The contacts have been regularly updated in the inter-services group on forestry meetings.

The Commission initiatives, processes ongoing and outcomes of international negotiations have been regularly **presented to SFC by responsible Directorate General representatives (activity 14.2)**, and by the Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development representatives to AGFC. Topics addressed during 2007-2011 have been related to for example rural development (Commission proposal for amending EC1698/2005 in 2010, and proposal for post-2013 rural development policy), plant health (review of EU legislation on the marketing seed and plant propagating material), nature conservation (e.g. biodiversity strategy, Natura2000), risk management (Commission Communication on prevention of natural and man-made hazards), renewable energy (e.g. sustainability of biomass; RES directive), and industry (F-BI Communication).

Key Action 15. Apply the open method of coordination (OMC) to national forest programmes.

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Leading actor</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
15.1 Explore the OMC and its potential to be used for voluntary coordination in the field of forest policy	COM	2010-2011

The target of Key Action 15 is to explore the open method of coordination (OMC) and its potential to be used for voluntary coordination in the field of forest policy. The activity was scheduled for the second half of the EU FAP implementation.

The Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management of Austria investigated OMC in 2006 in a study “Modes of governance for European Forest Policy coordination, co-operation, and communication”, and it was presented in the Austrian presidency meeting of the forest directors (June 2006). Key Action 15 was included in the EU FAP work programme, but no specific action took place until the issue was addressed in the SFC meeting (July 2010) orientation discussion for the review of the EU forestry strategy. At the stage of ex-post evaluation the work of SFC ad hoc working group on review of the EU forestry strategy is still ongoing – it is a framework to explore OMC together with other options for coordination in the field of forest policy.

The study *EU policy options for the protection of European forests against harmful impacts* (IFP and Ecologic, 2009) investigated OMC as a part of the tender “Implementation of the EU Forestry Strategy: How to protect EU Forests against harmful impacts?” The study summarises the positive and negative aspects of this approach as follows: OMC may enhance the learning process and mutual understanding, encourage stakeholder participation, and provide a flexible and voluntary approach as incentive to Member States to participate and share their best practice examples, while the negative aspects include that its effectiveness is questionable because there are no enforcement mechanisms for Member States implementation, and the approach is complex and time-demanding. In addition to this, the OMC has also been elaborated in scientific papers. For example, the paper by Pülzl and Lazdinis (2011) proposes a structure and method for implementing OMC for forest policies at EU level, basically ensuring a high-level political support and follow-up for the Action Plan, and utilising also the Council Working party on Forestry and the Forest Directors meetings in the implementation. At the stage of ex-post evaluation of EU FAP, the pan-European process has again raised the option of a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe; this work is ongoing and will be concluded in 2013.

Key Action 16. Strengthen the EU profile in international forest-related processes

Activity	Leading actor	Timeframe
16.1 Participation in international processes relevant to forests and forestry	MS, COM	2007-2011
16.2 Participation in the MCPFE process	COM	2007-2011

The target of Key Action 16 is a high degree of coordination both within the Commission and in the Member States to ensure coherence in different international forest-related processes. **Activity 16.1 covers participation in international processes relevant to forests and forestry** such as UNFF and CPF, FLEGT, FAO COFO, ITTO, CBD, CITES, UNFCCC, UNCCD as well as IPPC, EPPO and OECD Scheme for the Control of Forest Reproductive Material Moving in International Trade.

The United Nations forum on forests (UNFF) meets every second year, during the EU FAP period in 2007, 2009 and 2011. The Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All types of Forests was adopted in 2007 (the four global objectives on forests), and in accordance of the UNFF Multiannual programme the following UNFF sessions concentrated on: Forests in a changing environment & Means of implementation for sustainable forest management (financial approach) UNFF-8 (2009), and Forests for people, livelihoods and poverty eradication UNFF-9 (2011). Member States contributed to these sessions with individual reports as well as EU response led by the presidency. The biennial UN FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO) meeting is held in Rome and the two recent meetings were held in conjunction with World Forest Week in March 2009 and October 2010. Preparations for these international processes are led by the EU presidencies and discussed in the Council Working Party on Forestry (WPF). There are also EU side-meetings held during the international sessions to coordinate the EU positions. Presidency programmes are presented in the Council WPF, but some Member States informed also SFC (and AGFC) about the events and priorities related to forestry issues during the presidencies.

International efforts to combat illegal logging and trade of illegal timber have continued during the EU FAP implementation. In the EU, the implementation of the EU Action Plan for Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT), adopted in 2003, has proceeded with the bilateral Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) negotiations between the European Union and countries in Africa and Asia. Expressions of interest have been received also from countries in the Asia-Pacific region and Central and South America. The public procurement policies already in place have been adapted in several Member States as a demand-side measure to support the FLEGT Action Plan implementation, recognising FLEGT-licensed timber or timber products once they are in the market (Hudson and Paul, 2011). The EU Timber Regulation (EU No. 995/2010) laying down the obligations of operators who place timber and timber products on the market was adopted in October 2010 through a co-decision procedure between the Council and the European Parliament. A Commission delegated regulation for the implementing details concerning monitoring organisations (MOs) was published in February 2012 (COM (2012)1145) and an Implementing Regulation was adopted on July 2012 (EU No. 995/201).

International negotiations in UNFCCC and CBD have addressed several forest-related issues – see objective 2. The Commission informed the SFC (and AGFC) meetings about these international meetings and processes, and about the Commission Communications and regulations.

The Commission Communication “Addressing the challenges of deforestation and forest degradation to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss” (COM(2008)645) – the so-called REDD Communication – was adopted in October 2008 and presented to the AGFC. It sets the EU target for halting global forest cover loss by 2030 at the latest and reducing gross tropical deforestation by at least 50% by 2020 from 2008 levels. In order to identify and build operational synergies between the international mechanisms to provide incentives for developing countries to reduce emissions (REDD+) and the EU FLEGT processes in the EU, the European Forest Institute’s EU REDD Facility was established in December 2010 – thus, in addition to the EFI EU FLEGT Facility established in 2006 to support the European Commission in the VPA processes. The EFI EU FLEGT Facility is financed from the Environment and Natural Resources Thematic Programme (ENRTP) and a number of Member States provide technical and financial support for the Commission in the VPA processes.

With regard to the IPPC, International Plant Protection Convention (where 27 Member States and the European Commission are involved) the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO) serves as the Regional Plant Protection Organization for Europe. Another process followed for reproductive materials is the OECD Scheme for the Control of Forest Reproductive Material Moving in International Trade (incl. 15 Member States implementing the Scheme).

Activity 16.2 covers participation in the Ministerial Conference on Protection of Forests in Europe. The Member States and the European Community are signatories in this process, now called Forest Europe. There were two Ministerial Conferences during the EU FAP implementation period in Warsaw in November 2007 and in Oslo in June 2011. At the Oslo Ministerial Conference, the Ministers responsible for forests in Europe and the EU adopted two Oslo decisions: European Forests 2020 and Oslo Ministerial Mandate for Negotiating a legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe. European Forests 2020 included a vision for forests in Europe, identified eight goals and specified the European 2020 targets in support of vision and goals. The targets to be achieved addressed the implementation of national forest programmes, improved forest knowledge through research, increasing supply of wood, estimation of the full value of ecosystem services, strategies for forests and climate change adaptation, halved rate of loss of forest biodiversity, fully recognized role of forests in combating desertification, significant increase of socio-economic benefits as well as effective measures to eliminate illegal logging and associated trade.

Preparations for and follow-up of the Oslo ministerial conference were addressed at the EU level between the Member States in the Council WPF and within Commission in the ISGF. Side-meetings held during the international sessions help to coordinate the EU positions to the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) meetings (from 2011 onwards).

Between the ministerial conferences there were regular expert level meetings, MCPFE working groups, international workshops and definition of the Forest Europe communication strategy. Synergies with the EU FAP work programme were sought by inviting the MCPFE Liaison Unit representative in SFC ad hoc working groups on non-wood forest goods and services (Key Action 3), public procurement of wood and wood-based products (Key Action 17) and communication strategy (Key Action 18), as well as by the Commission representatives, in addition to the Member State representatives participating in defining the Forest Europe multi-annual work programme and Forest Europe communication strategy.

Another pan-European forum where EU Member States are active is the UNECE Timber Committee and FAO European Forestry Commission. The UNECE Timber Committee meets annually, while the Forestry Commission meets every second year (2008, 2010, and 2011). Every four years, the Committee and the Commission meet jointly (2008, 2011). The Strategic Plan of the UNECE/FAO Integrated Programme of Work on Timber and Forestry 2008-2013 indicates close cooperation with MCPFE/Forest Europe and the European Commission. Furthermore, the programme indicates seven Teams of Specialists (ToS) for the period 2008-2010, renewable until 2013 on Sustainable Forest Products; on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management; on Forest Policy in Eastern Europe and Central Asia; on Forest Fire; Forest Communicators Network (incl. a Sub-Group on Forest Pedagogics); Joint UNECE/FAO/ILO Expert Network to Implement Sustainable Forest Management, and; on Forest Sector Outlook. Both Member States and Commission representatives participate in the meetings.

In addition to the international processes foreseen in the EU FAP work programme, the SFC meetings have also served as a forum to share information about regional processes such as Collaborative Partnership on Mediterranean Forests (launched in 2010); EU Baltic Sea Strategy and Action Plan (incl. 2009/2010 launching of Priority 9 to reinforce sustainable agriculture, forestry and fisheries), and the Carpathian Convention (incl. Protocols on Sustainable Forest Management and on Sustainable Tourism adopted in 2011). Information on recent developments is given to SFC by respective Member States on their own initiative or upon request by the Commission.

Key Action 17. Encourage the use of wood and other forest products from sustainably managed forests

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Leading actor</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
17.1 Communication concerning the competitiveness of Forest-based Industries	COM	2008 –
17.2 Exchange experience between MS, Commission services and stakeholders on developing guidelines for application of the Public Procurement Directive to forest products, in order to achieve better compatibility with each other and also in support of the EU-FLEGT Action Plan	COM, SFC	2007-2010

The **Commission Communication on innovative and sustainable forest-based industries in the EU (COM(2008)113) (activity 17.1)** was adopted in February 2008. The Action Plan for implementation was presented to SFC (May 2009) and the state of the play has been regularly reported to SFC (and AGFC). The Communication is complementary to EU FAP; both include goals for sustainable resource supply, climate change, and research and innovation, but the EU FAP concentrates on forestry issues and the Forest-based Industries (F-BI) Communication develops the industrial dimension. Complementing actions on F-BI include innovation and R&D (relating to Key Action 2), climate change policies and environmental legislation (relating to Key Action 6), different uses of biomass; and domestic wood supply, increased wood mobilisation and other means to improve access to raw material (relating to

Objective 1); communication and information (relating to Key Action 18). No specific joint actions between the two Action Plans have taken place to encourage the use of wood from sustainably managed forests.

Exchange of experience between the Member States, Commission and stakeholders on developing guidelines for application of the Public Procurement Directive to forest products (activity 17.2) took place in SFC meetings, two conferences arranged in 2008 and SFC ad hoc Working Group on Public Procurement of Wood and Wood-based Products (2009-2010). The working group aimed to exchange experiences between the Member States, Commission services and stakeholders to achieve better compatibility between different approaches applied in the Member States, and also to support the EU FLEGT Action Plan. Its report is publicly available and concludes proposals for both the Commission and Member States for the follow-up steps, also including a recommendation to launch a pilot project initiative which would provide an integrated and common approach on the implementation of different countries' wood procurement policies.

A major development in the timber sector in 2008-2010 was the preparation of the EU Timber Regulation (EU No 995/2010), which prohibits placing illegal timber and timber products on the EU market and obliges the operators to use a due diligence system to ascertain that the timber they sell in the EU was harvested legally. The regulation (to be applied from 2013 March onwards) applies to both EU and imported timber.

The Commission Communication on Public Procurement for a Better Environment (COM(2008)400) includes four sectors relevant for wood and wood-based products (e.g. construction, paper, furniture and energy). Preparation of detailed guidance for GPP is underway. Public Consultation on future GPP policies was open in January-April 2012, together with other potential measures related to Sustainable Consumption and Production (product environmental footprint and environmental footprint of organisations). Commission services have worked to develop a harmonised methodology for the calculation of the environmental footprint of products (including carbon footprint). There are a number of pilot studies to test a technical guide for the method, and the process aimed at developing Product Footprint Category Rules for paper has been tested in collaboration with the Confederation of European Paper Industries (CEPI). The Resource Efficiency Roadmap (COM(2011)571) has further underlined the need for a common methodological approach to assess environmental performance of products, services and companies.

In December 2011 the Commission issued a legislative proposal for the modernisation of the current EU public procurement Directives²⁶ (Directive 2004/17/EC and 2004/18/EC). One of the main objectives of the reform is to further facilitate the strategic use of public procurement to support the Europe 2020 strategy as one of the market-based instruments to be used to improve framework conditions for business to innovate and to support the shift towards a more resource-efficient and low-carbon economy.

In the EU FAP mid-term and ex-post evaluation surveys several Member States report that public procurement guidelines have been investigated to better address wood and wood-based products. Only three Member States out of the total 25 respondents indicate that the activity is not on their national agenda. Revision of Public Procurement guidance for wood and wood products has been made in France and Denmark, but in the ex-post evaluation surveys some Member States report that the work in the framework of EU FAP has given an additional driver for the national level processes and to prepare for the EU Timber Regulation requirements. Parallel to the EU FAP activities there are wood promotion campaigns and research ongoing in several countries, as well as incentives to promote use of wood in construction sector.

Stakeholders were involved in the consultations for the preparation of the F-BI Communication, mainly through a public consultation and through the Advisory Committee on

²⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/publicprocurement/modernising_rules/reform_proposals_en.htm

Community Policy regarding Forestry and Forest-based Industries. The AGFC was also informed and consulted and, in its meeting of July 2008, commented on the actions recommended for prioritisation in the EU Commission activities and financial interventions. Stakeholders participated also in the Public Procurement workshops and in the above-mentioned SFC ad hoc working group. Preparation of the due diligence / timber regulation was presented by the Commission to AGFC (and AC-FBI) meetings. Several stakeholders (including both NGOs and industry federations) have their own activities, events and campaigns on promotion of wood and wood products, as well as legality and sustainability issues.

Key Action 18. Improve information exchange and communication

Activity		Leading actor	Timeframe
18.1	Develop a communication strategy on forestry and exchange experience between MS on forest communication	COM, SFC	2007-2009
18.2	Develop a "forestry" site on the Europa website and ensure that forest-related information in the relevant websites of the MS is available and can be linked with the Europa forestry site	COM, MS	2007-2008
18.3	Work on the development of a European Forest Information and Communication Platform	COM, MS	2006-2008
18.4	Organise visibility events, such as a "Forest Week" or "Forest Day" to raise awareness of the benefits of sustainable forest management	COM, MS	2008 / 2009

The target of Key Action 18 is to ensure availability and communication of up-to-date information for enhancing public awareness and consideration of forestry in policy-making.

As a first step for the **communication strategy (activity 18.1)**, a contract study for DG AGRI was carried out in 2008-2009 on public perceptions on forests and forestry "*Shaping forest communication in the European Union: public perceptions of forests and forestry*" (ECORYS, 2009). The EU Forest Communication Strategy was prepared by the SFC ad hoc working group and the strategy (March 2011) is publicly available. Its coherence with UNECE/FAO Forest Communicators Network (FCN) Strategic Framework for Forest Communication in Europe (Sept.2011) and the Forest Europe communication strategy (2010) has been built up by ensuring close communication between the three parallel processes by the Member State representatives active in all three.

The Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development **website for "Forestry measures"**²⁷ (activity 18.2) includes basic documents on EU FAP, on forestry strategy and the Action Plan, as well as lists of decisions of the SFC meetings and the SFC opinions. Links to other forest-related websites by the different Commission departments are also available. In the document library a number of studies and other materials as well as the SFC ad hoc Working Group final reports are available for downloading. The forestry websites at Member State level are focused on national issues, but some include also information about EU and other international aspects.

The preparatory action for a **European Forest Information and Communication Platform (EFICP) (activity 18.3)** was launched by the Commission (December 2005) as a follow-up of the expired regulation on the European Forestry Information and Communication System (EFICS). The preparatory action was completed in 2007/2008, and the EFICP technical component for an internet-based information and communication portal has become an integral part of the European Forest Data Centre EFDAC²⁸ (Key Action 8). Follow-up workshops for the development of the EFDAC were organised by the Joint Research Centre in December 2008, October 2009 and November 2010. Several Member States contributed to the work of EFICP and EFDAC.

²⁷ <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/fore/>

²⁸ <http://efdac.jrc.ec.europa.eu/> for further details see the Key Action 8

Visibility events (activity 18.4), such as forest weeks, forest days and other activities are arranged on a regular basis in the Member States. During EU FAP period two major visibility events at international level took place: following the MCPFE ministerial conference decision in 2007 “*The pan-European Forest Week 2008*” was arranged on 20-24 October, and the year 2011 was the UN International Year of Forests (IYF). Member States and stakeholders participated in and contributed actively to both events. For EU visibility, the Commission produced two brochures: “*The EU Forest Action Plan 2007-2011*” (2008) and “*Europe’s forests - sustaining life*” (2011).

In the ex-post evaluation surveys all 25 responding Member States indicated measures in this activity. Several Member States also refer to long traditions in arranging regular forest days or forest weeks; such as Poland, Latvia and Bulgaria report that forest days have been organised in these countries since the late 1920s/1930s. Also regular regional events are arranged, for example, the “Weekend du Bois” between Luxembourg, the Wallonia region in Belgium, and the Champagne-Ardenne region in France. Many Member States also underline the importance of information and communication measures in planning and implementing national forest programmes.

The UN International Year of Forests (IYF) 2011 events boosted forest communication measures addressing the general public. These activities across the whole Europe included for example regional events, conferences, debates, exhibitions, campaigns for schools, thematic events throughout the year, activities for children, and websites for information about forests and forestry, as well as for visibility of the IYF events. The activities were financed from national and regional sources, although also several other countries were active apart from those who reported it in the EU FAP ex-post evaluation surveys. Other events, such as, the International Year of Biodiversity IYB (2010) did not specifically highlight forests, but the forest and nature directors meeting during EU presidency in Belgium had this topic centrally on the agenda. The Green Week events on European environment policy have also included forest-related events in several years, although not specifically addressing forests as such: the Green Week 2007 concentrated on “Past lessons, future challenges”, 2008 on natural resources, waste management, production and consumption, 2009 on climate change, 2011 on resource efficiency, and 2012 will concentrate on water.

3 Methodology

3.1 General approach, scope and timeframe

The ex-post evaluation covers the 18 Key Actions and 55 activities defined in the EU FAP work programme, at the Community level and in the 27 EU Member States. The description of the implementation is based on the progress reports presented by the Commission as a part of the Standing Forestry Committee (SFC) annual work programmes and on the information collected by the evaluation questionnaires and interviews, both from the Commission and Member States. The period of analysis covers the EU FAP implementation period 2007-2011.

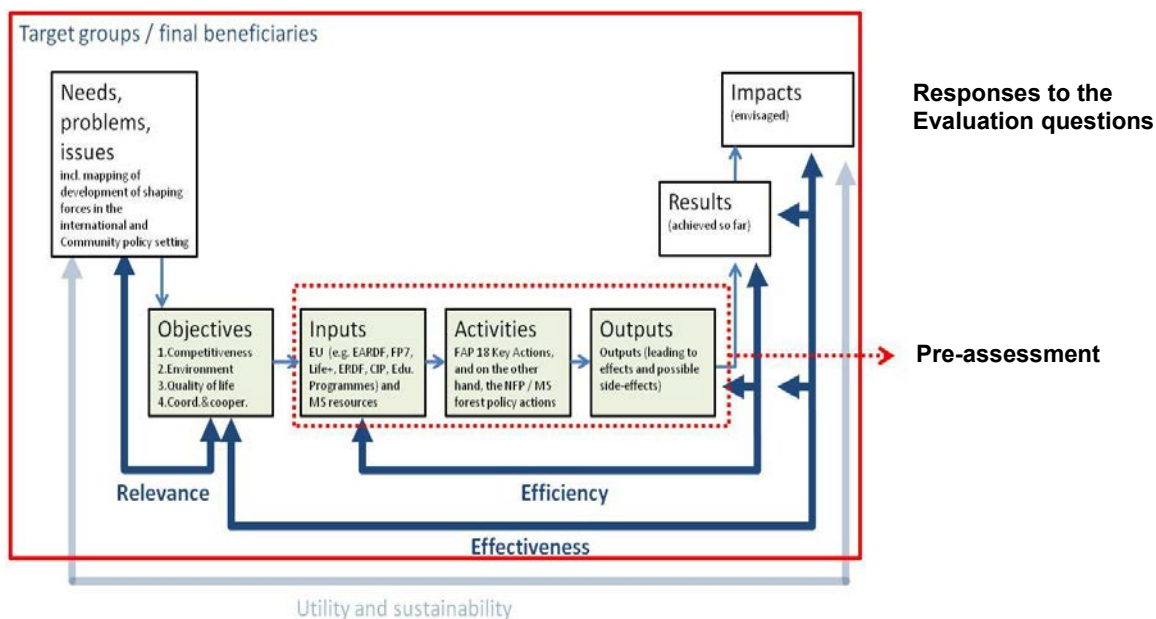


Figure 8. EU FAP Ex-Post Evaluation.

Dotted lines delineate the scope of the implementation review (e.g. the pre-assessment as part of the Evaluation Question 1), and the full lines delineate the scope of the whole evaluation (responses to the Evaluation Questions 1-5).

The ex-post evaluation implementation reporting and pre-assessment is largely based on the work started in the mid-term evaluation (2009), but now extending the *observations* and *analysis* to the second half of the Action Plan implementation period (see Figure 8) and collecting evidence on results, effects and (expected) impacts of the activities carried out.

3.2 Intervention logic model, definitions and judgement criteria

Following the approach applied in the mid-term evaluation, the monitoring and evaluation framework for the ex-post evaluation is based on the same Intervention Logic Model. Figure 9 depicts the causal relationships between the outputs of the EU FAP, including relevant inputs, activities, and expected results. Description of the implementation provides an answer to what activities have taken place, by whom and (to the extent possible) with which resources, and which outputs (concrete products and services) were produced. Effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation is assessed in relation to the results that have been achieved in contrast to the results and impacts that were expected to have been achieved by the EU FAP.

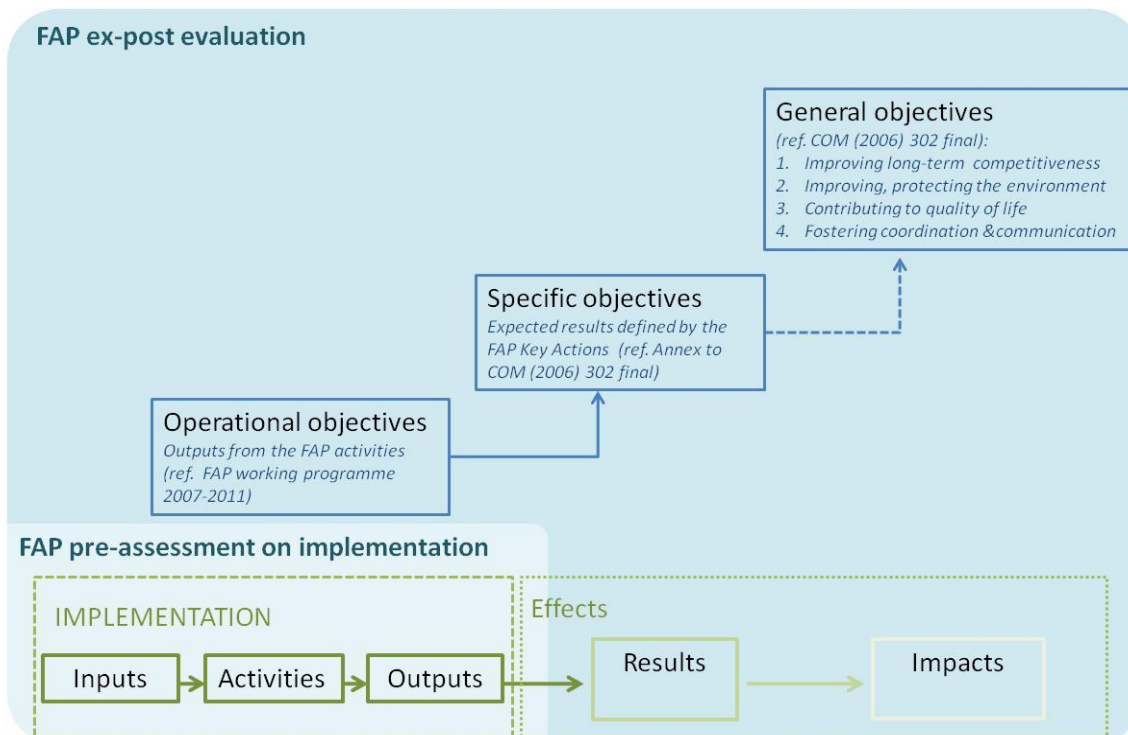


Figure 9 The EU FAP intervention logic.

Causal relationships elaborated in the Action Plan objectives hierarchy and the analysis of the implementation and effects.

The ex-post evaluation covers two Evaluation Themes, namely, (1) an evaluation of the implementation and (2) an evaluation of relevance. These themes are addressed across 5 Evaluation Questions (EQs). The first EQ focuses on the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation. These terms are understood as:

Effectiveness: The extent to which the EU FAP objectives and intended results were achieved or are expected to be achieved. Based on the inventory of activities evidence is gathered about results and effects from the activities of the Action Plan. Evidence is collected both from secondary sources and from the perceptions of the Leading Actors implementing the Action Plan (Commission Services and Member States) as well as from the stakeholders that were (directly or indirectly) affected by the Action Plan.

Efficiency: The extent to which outputs and/or the desired effects were achieved with the best possible use of resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, administrative costs, etc.). The Action Plan documents indicate existing financial instruments that were used in implementing the activities of the Action Plan. However, no financial targets are set in the Action Plan documentation. Information collection uses reviews of secondary sources (financing programmes, reports on use of other relevant instruments such as the forestry measures in Rural Development Programmes and LIFE+) and information from the Leading Actors and the stakeholders. The perceptions of Leading Actors as well as stakeholders on good practices and/or shortcomings in the implementation are used to illustrate the assessment of efficiency.

The second EQ focuses on how the Action Plan contributed to improving the coherence and cross-sectoral cooperation in implementing the EU Forestry Strategy. These terms are understood as:

Coherence: The extent to which the EU FAP activities were contradictory across the horizontal and vertical level and their contribution to the objectives of the EU Forestry Strategy. Coherence is assessed at: (1) *horizontal level*: across relevant policy areas at EU and Member States level, and (2) *vertical level*: between international, EU and Member State levels.

Cooperation: The extent to which the EU FAP activities enhance the cooperation between actors implementing the EU Forestry Strategy principles. Cooperation is assessed at: (1) *horizontal level*: across actors of relevant policy areas at EU and Member States level, and (2) *vertical level*: between actors at the international, EU and Member States level.

The third EQ focuses on contribution of the Action Plan to balancing the economic, environmental and socio-cultural objectives related to forestry. These terms are understood as:

Balanced contribution of the Action Plan refers to activities formulated for EU FAP objectives (1 to 4), and activities carried out by the EU FAP, including expected impacts, how they were addressed and their contribution to the economic, environmental and socio-cultural objectives.

Economic, environmental, socio-cultural objectives refer to the division of sustainability into three domains: economic (e.g. standard of living), ecological (e.g. biophysical carrying capacity) and socio-cultural (e.g. systems of governance). This generates an operational view of sustainability that stimulates environmental stewardship, social responsibility and economic viability related to forestry. Environmental, economic and socio-cultural criteria have to be considered with equal importance.

The analysis of **relevance** (Evaluation Theme 2) assesses the extent to which the EU FAP activities were consistent with the current and/or future needs of the stakeholders (including key actors at international, EU and Member States levels). This assessment includes an analysis of the EU FAP in relation to the needs, problems and issues that the Action Plan was expected to address. Relevance was approached from three angles:

- (1) Relevance of *issues*. The EU Forestry Strategy definitions, the EU FAP Objectives, and an investigation into new emerging issues,
- (2) Relevance of *instruments*. The Action Plan, Key Actions and activities, including an investigation of any activities missing from the Action Plan, and
- (3) Relevance of the *organisational set-up*. This is done through an assessment made by the evaluation team, utilising perceptions of the Leading Actors implementing the plan (the Commission and the Member States) and feedback from the stakeholders.

Theme 2 includes two EQs. The first addresses the added value of the EU FAP in implementing the EU Forestry Strategy and the second addresses the relevance of the Action Plan objectives, key actions, activities and the adequacy of its organisational set-up. These terms are understood as:

Added value: The extent to which the implementation of the EU FAP adds benefits to what would have been the result without the EU FAP in implementing the EU Forestry Strategy. It is defined by the (1) *degree of coherence and coordination*, (2) *efficiency and effectiveness*, and (3) *activities triggered and/or influenced* by the Action Plan.

Coordination can be understood as a (1) one-way hierarchical process of directing action, (2) two-way dialogue of sharing and gaining information about parallel actions, or (3) multiple level collaboration process of dialogue and feedback in preparing positions and future actions.

Organisational set-up refers to the established bodies relevant in the implementation of the EU FAP at the EU or Member State level.

Adequacy of the organizational set-up refers to the extent which the organisational setup facilitates and supports the Action Plan implementation.

3.3 Data and information sources

The evaluation is based on extensive background work as well as information and data collected through a document review, interviews and an evaluation survey.

The **document review** covers the official documentation of the EU FAP and its implementation. Some of the documents are publicly available, and some are not. The Commission has delivered meeting and working group materials to the evaluation team. Meeting documentations of the Standing Forestry Committee (for ex-post evaluation available in CIRCA), Advisory Group on Forestry and Cork (minutes from December 2008 onwards publicly available in the internet), and the Inter-services' Group on Forestry (for ex-post evaluation available in the CIRCA) were also made available to the evaluation team. Reviews of official documents of the European Council and the European Parliament are based on internet-based document registers that are publicly available. Also materials from relevant stakeholders, including the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions, have been reviewed. Furthermore, information on activities carried out has also been collected from the public databases of several financing instruments.

The **information collection tools** (evaluation survey and interviews) were designed with three target groups in mind: (1) Commission Services, (2) Member States, and (3) stakeholders. The Commission was a Leading Actor in the implementation of the EU FAP, and the **Commission survey** was constructed to go through all EU FAP activities in detail. In practice, the respondents concentrated on the questions and specific Key Actions that were relevant to their work for the EU FAP. **Interviews** (personal and phone interviews) were carried out between February and March 2012 to complete the data collection. In total 16 Commission Departments and Services were contacted for the assessment. Although information and perceptions were collected from several departments, the evaluation report does not distinguish which department has been active in which Key Action or given which assessment. The information collected from the Commission representatives presents descriptions of the implementation and self-assessment of the progress made and the involvement of other Leading Actors (e.g. other Commission Services and Member States) and stakeholders in specific EU FAP objectives or Key Actions.

The **Member State survey** included an inventory of the EU FAP Key Actions and activities where the Member States were indicated as Leading Actors in the EU FAP work programme (including pre-filled information about activities reported at mid-term). It also included an assessment on the EU FAP implementation, its relevance, and the relationship of the national forest programme and national forest policy to the Action Plan. The survey questionnaire was distributed through the contact persons for the Member State representatives in the Standing

Forestry Committee (SFC), and also additional phone interviews were carried out during the data collection in January–March, 2012. All 27 Member States were contacted for the survey and a response was received from 25 Member States (all except Belgium and Malta). Together with the status of implementation, the Member States were also requested to specify the most important measures in their country contributing to the achievement of the EU FAP. The level of detail in the Member States' responses vary considerably, but compared with the data provided at the mid-term, the information provided at the ex-post evaluation tends to be more general. The reported activities at national level are in most cases updated from the ones given in the mid-term evaluation and, for example, for Objective 3 that was mainly left for the second half of the implementation period, it gives a good overview of what has happened at Member State level. A number of respondents referred only to the Community level implementation, and a number of respondents pointed out that it is difficult to indicate activities at the national level that were implemented specifically due to the EU FAP. Furthermore, compared with the responses given at the mid-term, now some Key Actions were reported as being carried out on on-going bases, instead of reporting the same activities as “carried out” at the mid-term. This confirms the observation made at the mid-term; several activities are ongoing (in many cases for several years already) and they would have taken place also without the Action Plan, even though they can now be seen as contributing to the objectives defined in the EU FAP. As a consequence, the resulting list of activities in the Member States is not exhaustive, but rather provides a sample of activities carried out in line with the objectives of the Action Plan. Member State assessments of the implementation and relevance of the EU FAP provide feedback to the Community level implementation (e.g. implementation by the Commission as a Leading Actor, implementation by the Member States as Leading Actors, and involvement of the stakeholders in the EU FAP as a whole).

The **stakeholder survey** was distributed as an on-line survey. Targeted invitations were sent to the Advisory Group on Forestry and Cork and also to stakeholders from outside the actual implementation of the EU FAP. The distribution list covered 356 e-mail addresses, but there was also an open registration for contributing to the survey. The survey was open between February and March 2012. Additional phone interviews were conducted in order to complete the data collection. A total of 51 responses were received. It should also be noted that 6 responses correspond to organisational rather than individual replies to the survey. According to the AGFC groups, these stakeholder responses represent: producers (45.1%); traders, operators, industry and workers (15.7%); environmental organisations (17.6%); and other stakeholders (21.6%). Other stakeholders include mainly research and technology related organisations.

To allow for a comparison of the assessments by the three target groups, parts of the questionnaires were identical for all three groups. In addition to this, a number of interviews were conducted by telephone with stakeholder, Member State and Commission representatives to clarify responses in the questionnaires and to collect more detailed and general assessments on the ex-post evaluation questions. All responses were invited as an expert assessment, thus no official statements were requested from the organisations. This affects the quality of information, and consequently the nature of conclusions that can be drawn from the assessments. The assessments cannot be generalised to cover the organisation or group from which individual responses came. The level of detail and explanation of the views given vary considerably in the written questionnaire responses, which needs to be taken into account when reading the analysis for the evaluation questions.

3.4 Validity of assessment for judgements made in the analysis

The ex-post evaluation is based on extensive document reviews and data search, as well as on data and information collected by surveys. When assessing the validity of assessments made in this report, the following viewpoint should be taken into consideration.

The Action Plan is a tool to coordinate action ongoing at multiple levels. Although it defined the objectives and lines of action (Key Actions) on a timeline, with indication of Leading Actors

sharing the responsibility of implementation, there are *no specific financial or other resources earmarked* for the implementation of the Action Plan.

The activities referred to in the EU FAP are often already *ongoing*, and at the stage of ex-post evaluation it is very difficult to know to what extent (if at all) motivation for observed activities can be attributed to the EU FAP, even when the activities themselves are clearly defined. Much of the evidence gathered by evaluation surveys is in addition subjective and to a certain extent dependent on the knowledge, involvement and understanding of the individuals responding to questionnaires or interviews. The evaluation team has addressed this challenge by crosschecking the information between the survey responses (Commission, Member State and stakeholder responses) and by identifying additional sources of information (document reviews).

The objectives of the Action Plan are general and influence is expected to materialise in changes at Member States and the EU level. Apart from the meetings, reports and studies produced in the EU FAP, it is difficult to find concrete *evidence of up-take or follow-up* either at the Community or Member State level. Many processes are ongoing and parallel, interlinked and connected. Showing explicitly that specific influence or input was due to EU FAP activities is difficult, but it is equally difficult to provide evidence that EU FAP did not have an impact on these developments – even if it was one factor among several that led to the situation as it unfolds at the stage of the ex-post evaluation.

Judging the *efficiency* of individual Key Actions remains difficult if no concrete output (e.g. study) is involved and the resources employed are largely unknown. In the analysis, particular attention was paid to the cost-effectiveness of the activities, taking into consideration the potential of financing available, its actual uptake and its use in the context of the EU FAP activities. However, in this respect the analysis or the examples given are not exhaustive, but rather demonstrate implementation of the Action Plan for the issue in question.

The EU FAP is expected to connect to *national implementation* (e.g. National Forest Programmes (NFP) or equivalent). Elaboration and assessment of this connection has been challenging due to the fact that there were different expectations on EU FAP and its influence on NFP or the Member States level in general. Consequently no generalisation can be made for the whole EU27, but the analysis (see EQ2) illustrates the variety of goals, approaches and results across EU27.

The EU FAP covers *several policy areas* related to forestry, and the evaluation is expected to assess its influence on the development of those areas (e.g. F-BI, research and innovation, biodiversity conservation, climate action, energy). The evaluation surveys were, however, distributed through the established forestry contacts at EU level. The Member States were addressed in the surveys through the SFC representative, although the questions cover several ministries also beyond the forest or forestry related fields in the Member States; and the Commission Directorates General were addressed through the Inter-services Group on Forestry contacts, although the questions cover issues handled by several units within an individual Directorates General. This can affect the generalisation of evaluation assessments beyond the group reached in the surveys. The evaluation team has addressed this challenge by document reviews (including also scientific and other articles), and internet search of documents and references from other relevant bodies (e.g. Council and the European Parliament) and forest-related fora (pan-European and global level).

The level of detail in survey responses varies. The general, often anecdotal responses provided in the surveys by representatives of the Member States, the Commission and stakeholders leave room for interpretation, and this interpretation is influenced by the evaluation team members' expertise and *assumptions*. The evaluation team addressed this challenge by first dividing the responsibility of assessment of the four EU FAP objectives within the team, and then, when drafting the analysis and first lines of conclusions bringing the team

members' contributions under whole team's assessment and cross-checking of the assumptions made.

Especially the stakeholder responses in the evaluation surveys provide a *broad spectrum* of viewpoints on the Action Plan. The feedback and assessments given vary considerably from one respondent to another. In the analysis it has to be born in mind that some of the stakeholders have been centrally involved in the implementation (e.g. through AGFC, and SFC ad hoc working groups, studies), and are thus likely to be well aware of the Action Plan, and others have followed the Plan from more distance, not directly participating in it. Both viewpoints, from inside and outside the implementation, have been valuable input for the evaluation. The analyses in this report try to bring up the different viewpoints expressed, but the sharpness of statements is necessarily diluted when summarising the survey responses.

In the ex-post evaluation report the survey responses are referred to in the EQs (see chapter 4). Individual responses or feedback are not presented, but responses are summarised as response from Member States, Commission or stakeholder representatives. Commission responses from different DGs are not identified in the descriptions. Summing up the assessments for the analysis requires generalisation of the responses. The self-assessments of the Leading Actors (Commission and Member States) are included in the judgements, and feedback from other actors and the stakeholders is given in order to show whether the statements given can be verified. Conclusions made in the analysis are based on the evaluators' external view and expert opinion, unless specifically otherwise indicated. In the end, the judgements made in this report are based on the evaluation team's external view and expertise in the particular area.

4 Ex-post evaluation of the EU Forest Action Plan

4.1 Evaluation Theme 1: Implementation of the EU Forest Action Plan

Evaluation Theme 1 – implementation of the EU Forest Action Plan (EU FAP) – includes three Evaluation Questions (EQ): To what extent have the activities in the framework of the EU FAP been effective and efficient (EQ1); To what extent have the activities in the framework of the EU Forest Action Plan contributed to the improvement of coherence and cross-sectoral co-operation in implementing the EU Forestry Strategy (EQ2) and; To what extent have the activities in the framework of the EU Forest Action Plan contributed to balancing economic, environmental and socio-cultural objectives related to forestry (EQ3).

Each EQ begins with a brief introduction, and in the end there is a summary of lessons learnt during implementation. The lessons learnt have been collected from the evaluations survey responses, and they are complemented with open questions as food for thought for elaborating a possible follow-up of the Action Plan. For an easy overview, there are short summaries (text boxes) on the key elements of the analysis for each evaluation question.

4.1.1 *EQ1: To what extent have the activities in the framework of the EU Forest Action Plan been effective and efficient?*

The analysis for Evaluation Question 1 (EQ1) on effectiveness and efficiency completes the implementation review started in the mid-term evaluation (2009). The state of the play with implementation of all Key Actions was presented in this report (Chapter 2.3) together with overall developments in the EU policy framework and the operating environment.

The response to EQ1 is structured into four sub-questions, the four objectives of EU FAP. The ex-post evaluation analysis of effectiveness and efficiency concentrates on results and impacts, for example on what kind of follow-up and concrete next steps there has been due to activities carried out and results produced in the EU FAP (e.g. study reports, ad hoc working group recommendations and SFC opinions). Implementation has been investigated based on the activities foreseen in the EU FAP work programme 2007-2011. The Key Actions and activities in each objective are first assessed individually, and the analysis is then concluded on the effectiveness and efficiency for the whole EU FAP objective. In the beginning of each sub-question 1.1 to 1.4 there is a figure that provides a simplified presentation of the EU FAP Objective, its activities and goals.

Effectiveness is defined as the extent to which the objectives pursued by the activities in the key actions are achieved – or are expected to be achieved. **Efficiency** is understood as the best relationship between the resources employed and results achieved in pursuing these objectives through the related activities. There have been no specific financial resources allocated for implementation of the EU FAP, but the implementation leans on existing resources and financing sources. The analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency are largely based on qualitative assessments.

In the ex-post evaluation special effort has been put into providing concrete evidence and examples on implementation and the uptake of the EU FAP results at Community and Member State levels. Efficiency assessment of the Action Plan is challenging, because there cannot be systematic input-output analysis made. Instead the assessments are based on qualitative analysis and collection of lessons learnt during the implementation.

EQ1.1 To what extent have the activities in the framework of the EU Forest Action Plan (key actions 1 to 5) aimed to improve the long-term competitiveness been effective and efficient?

The aim of the EU FAP Objective 1 is *to improve the long-term competitiveness of the forest sector and to enhance the sustainable use of forest products and services*. As Figure 10 shows, Objective 1 includes five Key Actions (KA) and 14 activities. Long-term competitiveness was targeted by examining effects of globalisation on EU forestry, encouraging research and technological development, sharing experiences on the valuation and marketing of non-wood forest goods and services, promoting the use of forest biomass for energy generation, and fostering forest owner cooperation. The activities were, to a great extent, carried out during the first half of the EU FAP implementation period (2007-2009); the EU FAP work programme formulated the Key Actions 1-5 as precise activities (e.g. specific studies, reports); most of the activities were implemented as planned, and some of the outputs were already reported on in the mid-term evaluation of the EU FAP.

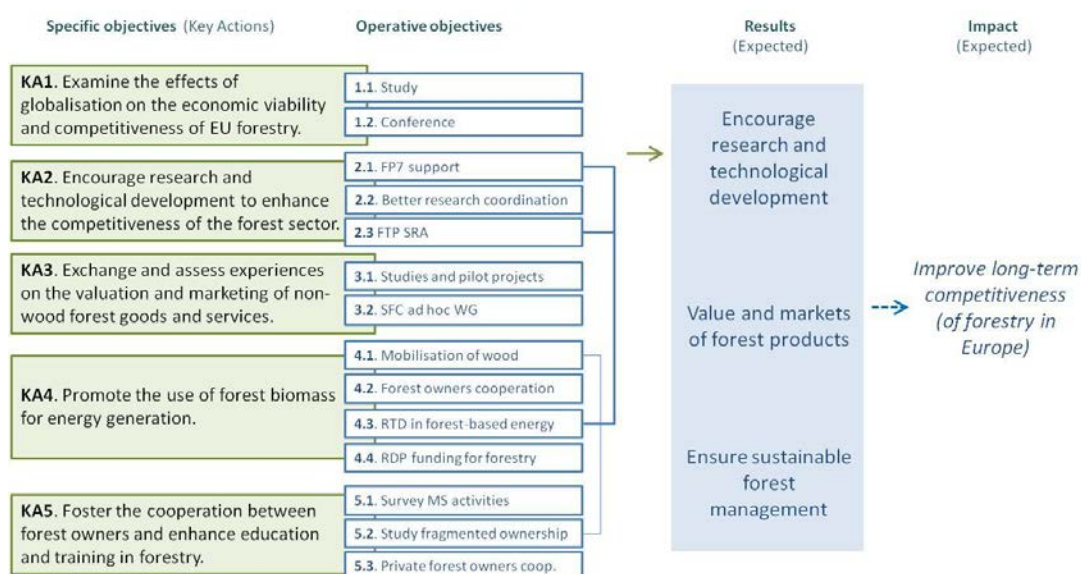


Figure 10. Objective 1 activities and Intervention Logic.

To what extent have the activities carried out in the Key Actions (1 to 5) led to an effect and are meeting (or expected to meet) their objectives?

KEY ACTION 1. Examine the effects of globalisation on the economic viability and competitiveness of EU forestry

Key Action 1 outputs have contributed to improving the competitiveness of EU forestry, through a study and conference focusing on the effects of globalisation on EU forestry. The economic situation has changed radically during the EU FAP implementation 2007-2011, and this has an impact also on the forest sector. The regular information sharing between the SFC, AGFC and Member States provided a way to inform Commission, Member States and stakeholders about the developments and the impact of the downturn. The EU FAP can also be seen as increasing visibility of competitiveness issues, including effects of globalisation or changing economic situation for the forest sector.

The activities in Key Action 1 were carried out as indicated in the EU FAP work programme (see chapter 2.3). The “*Study of the Effects of Globalization on the Economic Viability of EU forestry*” (IIASA, 2007) was referred in the evaluation surveys as a useful output from the EU FAP (Commission, Member State and stakeholder responses), contributing to a better

understanding of the effects of globalisation, and thus providing information for policy and decision-making. The study can be considered as a positive output from the EU FAP; even though the report figures may be out-of-date, the study was referred to in the ex-post evaluation interviews by the Commission as still being pertinent. Moreover, since the investigation originally took place in a very different economic climate, there has been some follow-up to address this gap in knowledge. For instance, the SFC has been regularly briefed on the impacts of the recent economic crisis on the competitiveness of the European forest sector. One indirect effect from the study has been the commissioning of a study on wood raw materials (in part as a follow-up to activity 1.1 and Key Action 4) by the Commission. It will help to address the changing economic climate for the Forest-based Industries (F-BI) and provide more up-to-date information concerning the competitiveness of the forest sector. The Commission also has a monthly series of reports on the impact of the economic crisis on key sectors of the EU – this is an ongoing parallel activity to EU FAP.

In the ex-post evaluation survey, Member States reported little about any potential effects triggered by the study. Follow-up activities have been limited to research projects that focused on the economic viability and competitiveness of the forest sector. It is an open question how much the activities reported by Member States can be attributed to the EU FAP, or whether they are a reaction to the economic downturn and/or other policy developments in Europe, or driven by national priorities. The evidence available therefore makes it difficult to substantiate that activities under Key Action 1 led to any concrete effects in the Member States.

Similarly, there were few examples of a follow-up in the Member States of the conference on strengthening competitiveness of forestry in 2007. The majority of activities concerned aimed at promoting forest sector competitiveness, ranging from high-level political events (aimed to keep the topic on the political agenda) to stakeholder and forest owner conferences. However, in the ex-post evaluation Member States and stakeholders refer to a number other activities, which contribute to this goal, such as the Forest-based Sector Technology Platform (FTP) conferences and other events addressing the topic of competitiveness for the forest sector. The impact of the EU FAP activities can be indirect, such as, providing additional visibility and frame of reference to address competitiveness issues, effects of globalisation, and changing economic basis for the sector in Europe.

KEY ACTION 2. Encourage research and technological development to enhance the competitiveness of the forest sector

Key Action 2, as well as the EU FAP as a whole has contributed to using FP7 resources for forest research. The Action Plan has contributed to strengthening the role of the Forest-based Sector Technology Platform (FTP), and to the use of FP7, such as increasing the number of forest sector relevant themes in the calls for proposals, number of projects approved and amount of financing allocated to forest sector projects.

Activities under Key Action 2 were mostly carried out as planned in the work programme. Although no specific forest science forum was established, the EU FAP implementation supported sharing of information about research programmes and research results (see Chapter 2.3). Research and Technological Development (RTD) was supported through the visibility that the Action Plan provided for forest-related topics. Forest sector research and development was strengthened in the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) in comparison to former framework programmes (although the FP5 and FP6 did not have similar means for supporting forest and forestry research); there was an increase in the number of relevant research activities that concerned the forest sector themes in FP7, in the number of calls, projects and financing. There is a clear connection between the EU FAP implementation to research, especially FP7 implementation, although in parallel to EU FAP there were also several other processes supporting this impact (especially the Forest-based sector Technology Platform FTP and its research agenda process both at European level and national levels).

Concrete means to achieve the impact in Key Action 2 were the SFC opinion on research and consistent support for the FTP activities. The EU FAP objectives were considered in the formulation of topics in the FP7 work programme, when also FTP input was collected and integrated. The research topics addressed and financed in FP7 cover all EU FAP objectives, for example the NEWFOREX project on forest externalities is relevant for the EU FAP Key Action 3, and several topics and projects were concerned with climate change (Key Action 6). Furthermore, the examples of COST scientific cooperation and ERA-NETs illustrate that also national resources were mobilised for research and technological development across Europe that supported the EU FAP implementation. These activities were also effective in improving the cooperation and communication on forest sector research at European level.

The establishment of the FTP was not an output from the EU FAP, even though the EU FAP was seen as supporting Forest-based Sector Technology Platform Strategic Research Agendas (SRA) in many Member States. Responses to the evaluation surveys suggest that the EU FAP strengthened the role of the FTP, and FTP provided support for strengthening the role of research in the EU FAP. The FTP conference on Forest Governance and the Role of Forestry Research in 2008 concluded recommendations for research, but the original aim of the EU FAP to explore possibilities for a Community forest science forum was not realised. On the whole, the FTP contributed to the mobilisation of national and EU resources for RTD. The political support by the EU FAP for the FTP was registered by decision-makers and broad support has strengthened the role and impact of the FTP. The forest science forum could be one solution for increasing an interdisciplinary approach and to explore new products and services for future markets and increase innovation input from outside the traditional forest sector.

KEY ACTION 3. Exchange and assess experiences on the valuation and marketing of non-wood forest goods and services

Key Action 3 focused on the valuation, compensation and innovative marketing of non-wood forest goods and services (NWFGS) and resulted in SFC ad hoc working group report, SFC opinion and a number of studies and pilot projects also at the Member States level. The EU FAP has been successful in increasing the awareness and research on NWFGS as follow-up activities. However, while there are a lot of ongoing activities within this topic (at the international, EU and Member State levels), there has been very limited adoption in terms of policy measures or instruments for valuation of non-wood forest goods and services.

The EU FAP Key Action 3 activities were carried as planned (see Chapter 2.3); the FORVALUE study and the SFC ad hoc working group on valuation and compensation methods of Non-Wood Forest Goods and Services (NWFGS) were completed already at mid-term of the implementation period. At the ex-post evaluation stage, the survey responses indicate that there has been little uptake of the reports and recommendations. Member States reported on follow-up activities that were particularly concerned with the development of methods for assessing and valuing forest ecosystem services, as well as specific research projects concerned with NWFGS. There is nonetheless a very limited translation of these activities into actual policy measures or implementation at Member State level. So while Key Action 3 was effective in producing the foreseen outputs, it was not effective in having an impact on policy at national level. The follow-up of studies and SFC opinion remain a shared responsibility for the Commission and the Member States also beyond the EU FAP implementation period.

The SFC and its working group allowed for sharing information and practices between Member States, Commission and key stakeholders. There have been several activities and studies conducted both at the EU, pan-European and Member State levels, but these studies refer mostly to the many forest functions and how they can be valued. Sometimes also compensation possibilities are explored, but there seems to be less investigation and awareness of marketing and new financing mechanisms. Furthermore, there are several international processes supporting visibility of non-wood forest goods and services and

ecosystem services (not only from forestry but also from agriculture). The NWFGS are discussed and studied, and there is raising awareness of NWFGS because of the initiatives at international level on payments for ecosystem services. Importance of sustainable management of non-market forest goods and services are reflected in a number of EU policy documents (e.g. biodiversity, energy policy and climate change debate), but there are fewer implementation actions ongoing.

The ongoing debate on the financing of ecosystem goods and services is also relevant with regard to biodiversity conservation in Natura 2000 (Key Action 7 in the EU FAP), but there seems to be only a minor effect from the work carried out in the EU FAP Key Action 3.

KEY ACTION 4. Promote the use of forest biomass for energy generation

Key Action 4 supported promotion of forest biomass for energy generation by studies, reports and exchange of expertise and practices between the Commission, Member States and key stakeholders. Use of forest-biomass for energy generation has been gaining in importance due to developments in energy and climate change mitigation policy, and there are several activities ongoing at EU and Member State levels. Although these processes are triggered by ongoing developments, the EU FAP has helped to raise awareness about forestry specific questions. The report on forestry measures in Rural Development Programmes and SFC opinion are acknowledged in the ex-post evaluation surveys to having contributed to preparation of the new rural development regulation.

The EU FAP activities on promoting forest biomass for energy generation were carried out as defined in the work programme (see Chapter 2.3). Given the increasing importance of forest biomass for energy generation in the forest sector and related policy fields (e.g. energy and climate change mitigation policy), the topic has gained importance during the EU FAP implementation and there have been several activities ongoing at EU and Member State levels. However, at the ex-post it remains unclear how much the EU FAP actually directed or had an influence on the developments – inclusion of Sustainable Forest Management approach to sustainability criteria for biomass, addressing of potential trade-offs related to increasing wood mobilisation for energy use, or responding to the increasing information needs. It rather seems that the EU FAP merely followed the ongoing trend and initiatives started in other policy sectors (especially energy, renewable energy targets).

The studies produced by several Commission services, as well as in numerous research and development projects, the work of the SFC ad hoc working group on mobilisation and efficient use of wood and wood residues for energy generation and SFC opinion have been concrete outputs produced in the EU FAP. There are indications that the reports have also been utilised in preparations related to the Renewable Energy Directive and follow-up as well as in addressing the issue in national forest programmes or rural development measures. In the ex-post evaluation surveys there was concern about the impact of renewable energy targets on forest sector development. For example, there are tensions between the wood-processing industries on increasing competition on wood raw material, and the environmental NGOs have argued that the Renewable Energy Directive might become a destructive force for forests. Moreover, survey results suggest that the EU FAP has only managed to have a limited impact on the preparation of the Renewable Energy Directive. The EU climate and energy package has resulted in impacts that raise controversial expectations in the forest sector and with regard to forestry in Europe.

Under the topic of developing cooperation methods and mechanisms between forest owners in energy markets, Member States report on improved cooperation and advisory services available for private forest owners, which have promoted the use of wood for the energy market. The ex-post evaluation surveys also indicate improvement in the economic data received from the Member States. This can have a positive and hopefully long-term impact on data availability for policy making, research and indirectly also for improving the assessment of ecosystems services.

The Commission report on forestry measures in Rural Development Programmes (RDP) and the SFC opinion were assessed positively in the ex-post evaluation surveys. This activity was originally included in the EU FAP work programme as only addressing Key Action 4 purposes, but through the implementation the Commission report covered all forestry measures. Several Member States report that the EU FAP has had an effect on rural development policy, by contributing to acknowledging the importance of forestry measures, and to planning and implementing forestry measures and investments of EARDF. Furthermore, the Commission and Member State respondents also recognise the impact of the deliberations within the framework of the EU FAP on the preparation of the new rural development regulation.

KEY ACTION 5. Foster the cooperation between forest owners and enhance education and training in forestry

Key Action 5 activities were mainly carried out at Member State level, and often supported with rural development funds. These activities contributed to fostering the cooperation between forest owners and enhancing education and training in forestry, although the activities were not necessarily reported to the EU level as implementation of the EU FAP. At EU level, the main activities were a good practice guidebook on wood mobilisation and a study on the prospects for the market supply of wood and other forest products from areas with fragmented forest-ownership structures.

The major part of activities under Key Action 5 was carried out at Member State level rather than at EU level (see Chapter 2.3 for more details). Several activities connected with this theme were also reported with regard to Key Action 5 on environmental education and Key Action 18 on information exchange and communication. Synergy with pan-European processes, work carried out in the Forest Europe (MCPFE) and UNECE/FAO workshops was supported by participation in workshops and the presentation of working group results between EU and pan-European audiences. A joint publication on “*Good practice guidance on the sustainable mobilisation of wood in Europe*” was published by the Commission in 2010.

Several Member States reported support measures for the development of advisory services in forestry as activities carried out in the rural development programme. However, the survey foreseen in the EU FAP work programme was not carried out, but the exchange on information and practices took place through the presentation of the European forest owner organisation and cooperation study (CEPF, 2008), the report on forestry measures in rural development programmes (Key Action 4), workshops on environmental education and Forest Communicators network (Key Action 10 and 18). The study “*Prospects for the market supply of wood and other forest products from areas with fragmented forest-ownership structures*” was identified in the ex-post evaluation surveys by Member State responses as an important output of the EU FAP.

Effectiveness of the Key Action 5 implementation is hampered by the fact that national activities are not reported to EU FAP implementation, although sometimes these activities include also international cooperation such as the PAWSMED project presented to the SFC in 2010. On the whole, the EU FAP state-of-the-play reports lack the contribution of the national and regional activities towards the EU FAP goals, which becomes evident in the mid-term and ex-post evaluation surveys. And even for the evaluation surveys the Member State responses do not give a full picture for implementation in EU27. The high relevance of this Key Action has to be seen against the background of changing forest ownership structure in several Member States, well as poor cooperation of forest owners affects the sustainable forest management and long-term viability of forestry in the EU.

To what extent were the activities under Key Actions (1-5) carried out efficiently?

There were no specific resources earmarked for implementation of the EU FAP objective 1 (Key Actions 1-5), but the EU resources were utilised for studies commissioned by the Commission and for Standing Forestry Committee ad hoc working groups. At the Member State level rural development funds, as well as national, often also regional funds were used for activities contributing to the EU FAP goals. For assessment of efficiency (and effectiveness), a more structured approach to target setting and reporting of national or when appropriate also regional activities would have been beneficial.

The activities under Objective 1 were started in the beginning of the EU FAP implementation period, resulting in a number of concrete outputs already at the mid-term stage. The activities planned in the work programme 2007-2011 were to a large extent implemented, and when considering the outputs reported, Objective 1 implementation has been efficient in utilising available resources and the structures for EU FAP implementation. For instance, the SFC ad hoc working groups, SFC opinions and studies were pointed out in the evaluation surveys as good practices for implementation. Although Member States' reports for their activities in support of the EU FAP goals are not always detailed in the ex-post evaluation surveys, it can be concluded that the Action Plan and its annual work programmes provided a concrete structure and frame of reference for addressing issues related to long-term competitiveness, as they were defined in the five Key Actions. Concrete examples of effects were mentioned above, for example the influence on forest sector research in FP7 as well as on rural development funding.

The assessment of efficiency of specific Key Actions, a study or exchange of information and practices is difficult. The ex-post evaluation surveys indicate that Member States assess these positively, but when it comes to practical implementation (e.g. valuation and compensation methods of Non-Wood Forest Goods and Services) there is less evidence on a concrete uptake. Efficiency (and effectiveness) could also have benefitted from a more cross-sectoral (or integrated) approach to addressing payments for ecosystems together with biodiversity conservation and/or agricultural sector issues. Compared with Key Actions 1 to 4, Key Action 5 was mainly implemented at Member State level; although Member States report national and regional activities to foster the cooperation between forest owners and to enhance education and training in forestry, there was no EU-level synthesis or exchange of information in the same manner as for Key Actions 1 to 4. This does not yet say anything about the efficiency of the approaches; other activities are more natural to implement at national or regional, rather than the EU, level. A more structured approach (e.g. concrete and measurable targets, commitment to report activities in a consistent way) could have improved efficiency (and effectiveness) of the EU FAP.

Conclusions

During the EU Forest Action Plan implementation period (2007-2011) the economic downturn significantly affected the European wood processing industry (e.g. wood working, pulp and paper). Natural and man-made hazards, such as forest fires and windstorms, caused damage with severe impacts on forestry at regional level. This affects the overall goal of Objective 1, to improve the long-term competitiveness.

The EU Forest Action Plan activities for improving long-term competitiveness were carried out as planned in the work programme. For example, a study was carried out to examine the effects of globalisation on the economic viability and competitiveness of forestry in the EU. Changes in the economic situation for the F-BI were briefed to the Standing Forestry Committee, thus sharing information at the EU level. In the ex-post evaluation surveys several Member States, Commission Services and stakeholders considered these activities beneficial.

Objective 1 contributed to encouraging research and technological development to enhance the competitiveness of the forest sector; the EU FAP was a regular reference point when

defining FP7 calls and the Action Plan can also be seen as having helped to strengthen the Forest-based Sector Technology Platform (FTP). Furthermore, research development project results were presented to the SFC, thus supporting leverage of research to policymaking and practice. The report on implementation of forestry measures in the Rural Development Programmes 2007-2013 led to a Standing Forestry Committee opinion and discussions in the SFC about the post-2013 policy that was utilised by the Commission when preparing the proposed new rural development regulation for 2014-2020.

A number of studies and two Standing Forestry Committee ad hoc working groups gathered technical expertise from the Member States and key stakeholders to exchange experiences and information on the valuation and marketing of non-wood forest goods and services, and on wood mobilisation for energy generation. The first mentioned shared practices between Member States and in the evaluation surveys there are a number of follow-up investigations and studies mentioned on non-wood goods and services or payments for ecosystem services, but uptake to concrete implementation is less evident. The topic of forest biomass for energy generation gained in importance during 2007-2011, in part driven by policy fields outside forestry (e.g. climate action and the renewable energy targets). The Action Plan has raised awareness and helped to coordinate efforts concerned with promoting forest biomass for energy generation. In the ex-post evaluation surveys, however, the possible trade-offs between different uses of wood, or between increasing wood mobilisations and biodiversity targets become evident.

With regard to enhancing cooperation between forest owners and education and training in forestry, activities were mainly carried out at the Member State level, often under the EU co-financed Rural Development Programmes. At the EU level, a study on prospects for the market supply of wood and other forest products from areas with fragmented forest-ownership structures was also carried out. Although this Key Action finds its implementation at national (or regional and local) level, the forest owner question has high relevance because forest ownership structures are changing in several Member States, and forestry know-how and capacities affect sustainable forest management and long-term viability of forestry in the EU.

Objective 1 can be seen as having improved the long-term competitiveness of forestry through information exchange between Member States, and with the influence on forest and forest sector research in FP7, as well as on rural development funding. Although there are several inter-relations between environmental objectives (ecosystem services, biodiversity Key Action 7), socio-cultural objectives (environmental education and information Key Action 10) and communication (information measures, benefits of SFM Key Action 18), Objective 1 activities on valuation and compensation methods for non-wood goods and services (Key Action 3), wood mobilisation for energy generation (Key Action 4) and forest owner cooperation and forestry education (Key Action 5) solely tended to focus on economic aspects of forestry. The EU Forest Action Plan has drawn attention to the economic aspect and long-term viability of Sustainable Forest Management.

EQ1.2 To what extent have the activities in the framework of the EU Forest Action Plan (Key Actions 6-9) aimed at improving and protecting the environment been effective and efficient?

The aim of the EU FAP Objective 2 is *to maintain and appropriately enhance biodiversity, carbon sequestration, integrity, health and resilience of forest ecosystems at multiple geographical scales*. As Figure 11 shows, Objective 2 includes four Key Actions (KA) and 15 activities. The activities were focused on improving and presenting the evidence base for forest environmental policy, monitoring and data services and achieving better co-ordination and information sharing both within and between the Commission and Member States. The implementation was spread across the whole Action Plan period in 2007-2011, with an emphasis on research activities at the beginning. Most, but not all, of the activities were implemented, but some were more open-ended than others, making it difficult to judge to what extent they had been completed.

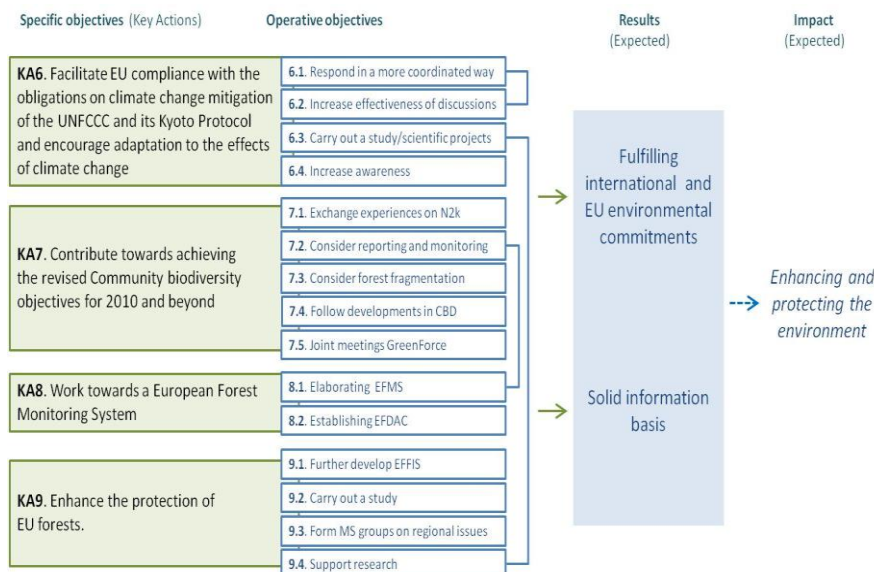


Figure 11. Objective 2 activities and Intervention Logic.

To what extent have the activities carried out in the Key Actions (6 to 9) led to an effect and are meeting (or expected to meet) their objectives?

KEY ACTION 6. Facilitate EU compliance with the obligations on climate change mitigation of the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol and encourage adaptation to the effects of climate change

Key Action 6 implementation made a useful and timely contribution to the evidence base for the Green Paper and the debate about the role of forests and climate change. In 2008 a new study was published on the impacts of climate change on forests and options for adaptation, followed by information sharing and discussions within a working group of the Standing Forestry Committee, which issued an opinion on climate change and forestry in 2011. In contrast, it is very difficult to assess what, if any, effect Key Action 6 implementation has had on improving harmonisation of EU efforts on UNFCCC and Kyoto protocol related obligations. There is little evidence of improved co-ordination of effort and information sharing across different policy sectors and governance levels, both within the Commission and at Member State level, as a result of the Action Plan. Member States reported activities on raising awareness of climate change and addressing its impacts on forests, although these appear to have been initiated in parallel to the Action Plan rather than as a direct response to it.

Most of the activities for Key Action 6 on climate change and forests were implemented as planned at EU level except for the specific action to improve exchanges between the Council expert group on sinks and the SFC, which was not achieved. Other than the work of the SFC, implementation of Member State activities was less complete.

Efforts to increase understanding and awareness of climate change issues within the SFC and to stimulate the engagement of the Member States' representatives on the SFC were clearly effective. Regular updates on UNFCCC meetings were provided by the Commission, and an SFC ad hoc Working Group on Climate Change and Forestry was established in 2009, composed of Member State and stakeholder representatives, with the aim of identifying technical forestry measures in adaptation and mitigation for Europe. During the next two years this group produced their own report, and SFC Opinion on climate change and forestry was concluded in February 2011 with proposals for action at EU and Member State levels.

Despite the success of work within SFC in terms of increased awareness of climate change issues among forestry authorities at Member State level, and the recognition of the value of information exchange, there is no clear evidence available that activities under the Action Plan would have led to more coordinated responses on forest and climate issues by Member States; in the ex-post evaluation survey two out of the 25 responding Member States specifically referred to the activities under the Action Plan having had an impact on improving LULUCF reporting. Commission services indicated that it was not always easy for Member States' forest administrations to accept that their participation in other policy sectors means accepting the dynamics of the EU policy processes. Some Member States thought that the Action Plan acted as a bridge between the climate accounting work and forestry practice, but others clearly indicated that they thought activities under the Action Plan had generally little impact on the efforts at national and EU level, which were most effectively coordinated through the Council Working Party responsible for coordinating the EU participation in UNFCCC negotiations. Stakeholders recognised the production of reports by SFC ad hoc Working Groups as an important though small step, but they were rather sceptical about the impact, mostly stating that it remains unclear whether the results from these reports have been used further, and how. As such, the efforts of the SFC ad hoc Working Group have not led to any perceivable follow-up at the EU level, and the Action Plan was not effective in improving exchanges between the SFC and the EU carbon sinks expert group.

The work within SFC was informed about the 2008 report summarising existing knowledge about observed and projected impacts of climate change on forests in Europe and reviewing of options for forests and forestry to adapt to climate change (EFI, 2008) and the follow-up scientific article (Lindner et al 2010). Within the Commission, this report was effective in providing evidence for the development of the Green Paper on forest protection and information related to climate change, and also as basis for discussions on proposed changes to the CAP forestry measures in the next multi-annual financial framework of the EU budget. The Commission supported several FP7 research projects concerned with the impact of climate change on forests, although it remains difficult to attribute this solely to the EU FAP. Nevertheless, other work under Key Action 6 and the response to the Green Paper consultation both revealed an awareness of the need for more research efforts to better understand the nature, extent and expected effects of climatic change on forests and the forest sector. The diversity of recent policy documents relevant to forests and climate change illustrate the scope for improving co-ordination of EU level work on forest activities, which directly affect both compliance with international climate change obligations and forest adaptation.

Although no synthesised information was produced from reports of Member State activities to increase awareness of the impacts of climate change on forests/forestry and the role of forests in mitigation, the ex-post evaluation surveys indicate that a majority of Member States have such work either in progress or completed. In 2009 the public perception study by ECORYS and BOKU (Key Action 18) indicated an increasing importance and greater public awareness on the issue of climate change and its relation to forests, a conclusion supported by results of the public consultation on the Green Paper. Although the responses provided by Member States suggest that many of their awareness-raising activities were carried out in parallel to the EU FAP rather than being part of it, the EU FAP may have had an additional driver to address importance of awareness-raising and information measures.

KEY ACTION 7. *Contribute towards achieving the revised Community biodiversity objectives for 2010 and beyond*

It is not possible to discern what impact, if any, activities under Key Action 7 have had on Community biodiversity objectives, because their potential impact could only be indirect. Implementation was only partial, for example the report published on experiences of implementing Natura 2000 in forest areas was based on experiences in a limited number of Member States, and opportunities for follow-up activities were mostly not taken, other than EU level discussion of future RDP support for environmental land management in forests, in the context of poor uptake of current biodiversity measures. Effective EU level discussions took place on the new EU Biodiversity Strategy and related monitoring and reporting, but these were driven by biodiversity policy processes rather than the EU FAP. In the first two years the GreenForce network provided an effective means for informal exchanges between Member States on nature conservation and forestry, but since 2010 the process seems to have faltered.

The objective to share experiences of implementing Natura 2000 in forest areas was only partially achieved. The Commission synthesis report on the implementation of Natura 2000 in forests covered only eleven of the 27 Member States, offering an indication of the lack of interest among the others, which is reflected in the very low uptake of the RDP support for high nature value forests. On a more positive note, the SFC opinion on forestry measures in Rural Development did include recommendations on forest environment and Natura 2000 support.

The considerable body of work undertaken by the Commission on developing the forest biodiversity targets and indicators, the 2010 baseline and the Biodiversity Information System for Europe (BISE), took place outside the framework of the EU FAP but efforts to keep the SFC informed were effective. Feedback from the responsible Commission services indicated that the Action Plan was useful in providing a framework and promoting related research activities. Following of developments in CBD and other international fora was also effective in that the SFC was regularly debriefed on forest-related developments under the international CBD process. Some Member States highlighted that such activities increased their understanding of common targets between forestry and biodiversity, which can be regarded as an indication of the effectiveness of information sharing efforts; on the other hand, the Member States have not explained if this improved understanding led to concrete activities or follow-ups.

Several Member States expressed the view that the GreenForce network was helpful in exchanging knowledge and experience across Member States and across forest and nature conservation authorities; although after 2009 there have been only two meetings of both Nature and Forest Directors, in 2010.

KEY ACTION 8. *Work towards a European Forest Monitoring System*

Key Action 8 outputs have been effective in securing the continuation of some EU level information and monitoring activities under the EU Forest Action Plan, following the repeal of the Forest Focus Regulation, but its potential for a significant improvement of information and monitoring systems at EU and pan-European level is yet to be fulfilled. The development of the European Forest Data Centre during this period has been successfully implemented but whether this is a response to the Action Plan or to other drivers is unclear.

Although Key Action 8 clearly aimed at developing a European Forest Monitoring System to fill the gap left by the expiry of the legal basis for forest monitoring, the continuation of the various elements of existing information collection systems has in practice relied upon LIFE+ funding and the development of available data resources previously built up in Member States, JRC and Eurostat on an individual project basis, rather than through a systematic EU wide approach. Since 2008 a considerable level of effort under Key Action 8 has been directed

towards a European Forest Monitoring System (EFMS) to prepare for policy improvements after 2014. It has been noted (by Commission services and stakeholder respondents) that the overall effectiveness of achieving Key Action 8 objectives has been partly undermined by a lack of articulated policy objectives and relevant performance-based indicators, lack of funding; and weak implementation by Member States. A number of stakeholders highlight the importance of several issues that are highly relevant to forest monitoring and information (e.g. increasing demands for wood resources) that received wide public attention at EU and Member State level only after the adoption of the Action Plan. As a result, this could not be reflected in the work under Key Action 8, for example, the pace of developments so far has not been sufficient to meet the challenges of the reporting requirements under UNFCCC, CBD and the information needed for responsible implementation of EU environmental policies, and political actors across the spectrum agree that monitoring should be a key issue of the future EU FAP.²⁹ This is also reflected in the EU level debate on forest protection and information, following the Commission White Paper on Adapting to Climate Change and the subsequent Green Paper.

Not surprisingly, there was certain confusion apparent in the assessment of the effectiveness of Key Action 8 by ex-post evaluation survey respondents at both EU and Member State levels, articulating both a conviction that the Action Plan is the best available tool at present, and a serious concern about the insufficiency of the existing policy instruments in the face of existing challenges. For instance, as reiterated in the Council Conclusions and in the European Parliament resolution on the Green Paper on forest protection and information, the current policy instruments available to tackle the face problems in the forest sector are inadequate in the face of the existing challenges. Overall, the reliance of the current system on short-term project funding and the lack of systematic EU wide data mean that the work in the EU FAP framework (activity 8.1) cannot be judged as fully effective elaboration of the EFMS. However, it must be recognised that this may be the best possible outcome that was achievable in the circumstances. There are considerable challenges in taking the forest monitoring framework forward at EU level on a more binding basis, which cannot be attributed to the design, structure or implementation of the EU FAP, given that a sizeable number of Member States are not interested in taking forestry policy initiatives beyond the status quo of the EU Forestry Strategy 1998.

The improvements seen in the EFDAC, including EFFIS, are the main success for Key Action 8 and appear to be an effective achievement of the objective, although it is not certain whether it is a clear-cut response to the EU FAP or simply driven by the availability of support under EU funding streams.

KEY ACTION 9. Enhance the protection of EU forests

Implementation of Key Action 9 has been effective in developing the European Forest Fire Information System, which is working well, but because its future depends on continued funding and voluntary co-operation by Member States, neither of which is certain, this is judged as not fully achieving the underlying objective.

The activities under Key Action 9 (which complement those under Key Action 11 on protective functions of forests) are aimed specifically at developing the existing forest fire information system and improving the evidence base and understanding of factors affecting forest condition, at EU level and regionally. There has been a clear effect in the development of the EFFIS, both on the part of the Commission and the Member States, with the involvement of all the Mediterranean Member States and the recent extension of EFFIS to non-EU countries in the region, and the technical scope of EFFIS has been expanded.

Several studies commissioned by the Commission explored factors affecting forest condition (see Chapter 2.3), including “*EU policy options for the protection of European forests against*

²⁹ Summary of public stakeholders' consultation on the forest protection and information green paper, 2010

harmful impacts (IFP and Ecologic, 2009)” which explored possible policy responses to threats to forest condition based on scenarios which envisaged a range of political willingness on the part of Member States to support the development EU policy tools. That work, together with other research on forest protection supported by a range of EU and Member States funding sources can be regarded as effective implementation towards the goal of Key Action 9 within the context envisaged when the Action Plan was prepared. However, this is not to suggest that the body of evidence on forest protection is complete, and it is clear that further investment will be needed in research to achieve a better understanding of potential threats to forests and effective responses to them.

Considering the wider objective of Key Action 9, to enhance the protection of EU forests, it is clear that there is a need for more effective action on the ground. The AGFC observed in 2009 that the withdrawal of Regulations 2158/92 and 2152/2003 (Fire Prevention and Forest Focus) and the transfer of prevention measures into EAFRD and LIFE+ has led to a reduction in measures to prevent forest risks in practically all Member States, a view echoed by the European Parliament in their 2011 report which described funding for fire protection as “inadequate”³⁰. The AGFC called for the re-establishment of independent financing for the prevention of forest fires and other forest disasters to protect the environment³¹.

To what extent were the activities under the Key Actions (6-9) carried out efficiently?

Implementation of the EU FAP Objective 2 (Key Actions 6-9) required EU resources for meetings, Standing Forestry Committee ad hoc working groups and for example studies commissioned by the Commission. At the Member State level Rural Development funds and national funds were utilised for activities, although half way through the implementation period there is a significant gap between planned allocations and resources used, particularly in the context of forest-environment and Natura 2000 payments, which were new biodiversity measures introduced for the 2007-13 RDPs. LIFE+ funds were used for a forest monitoring project, but for long-term funding of an EU-wide, coherent forest monitoring system is open.

Objective 2 (Key Actions 6-9) activities fall into three broad groups, requiring different types of resources, some of them on a significant scale. Information sharing required relatively few resources beyond support for the work of the SFC and other groups, but research projects and studies, monitoring and data collection required substantial investment. In the absence of specific resources allocated to EU FAP, these came from Commission services, a variety of EU and national research funds and national forest administrations. It is very difficult to identify what alternative resources might have been used, or to judge if EU FAP used the available resources efficiently, given the absence of quantified targets and the position of EU FAP as just one of several drivers of activities such as the development of EFDAC. Looking more widely at the use of EU resources to support forest management to deliver the biodiversity objectives of Key Action 7, a comparison of budget allocation and uptake of EAFRD resources of €8 billion allocated to forestry measures over the 2007-13 period suggests that these resources may not be fully used.

The SFC and GreenForce networks appears to have used their resources efficiently to provide a forum not available elsewhere in which Member States were able to share information and experiences, and develop reports and opinions relevant to Objective 2 work. A range of Member States stated that EU FAP processes (e.g. the work of ad hoc working groups) were underfunded. It is impossible to judge, in the context of this evaluation, if efficient use was made of the considerable resources allocated by Commission services and research funds to implementing Key Actions 6-9; in many cases implementation was effective, and although the Action Plan was not the only driver of the work it is very unlikely that the results would have been achieved in the absence of these resources.

³⁰ European Parliament (EP) adopted in May 2011 the Report (drafted by Kriton Arsenis) on the Commission Green Paper on forest protection and information in the EU - preparing forests for climate change

³¹ Minutes AGFC meeting 29 June 2009

Few Member States indicated that they had allocated specific resources to EU FAP activities (e.g. research studies), but a majority expressed that the EU FAP played an important role in influencing how financing was used, but the level of financing for forest activities by national budgets remains unclear. Member States seemed rather divided on whether the same impact could have been achieved through alternative ways of implementation, but no specific information for Objective 2 is available.

At Member State level, forest activities related to biodiversity and forest protection are supported mainly by two EU funds, EAFRD and LIFE+. EU expenditure for the 2007-13 EAFRD programming period for forestry management or forest-related measures that have the potential to deliver environmental outcomes (either directly or indirectly) is calculated to be €8 billion (€1.1 billion/year). Discrepancy between budget allocations and uptake remain key issues, and comparisons of actual needs with funding available (e.g. for Natura 2000 implementation) indicate that existing levels might not be sufficient (Hart et al. 2010, Kettunen et al. 2011) and might also have hampered the achievement of some objectives set by the EU FAP (Ecologic et al, 2010). As Figure 2 illustrates, half way through the implementation period there is a significant gap between planned allocations and resources used, particularly in the context of forest-environment and Natura 2000 payments which were new biodiversity measures introduced for the 2007-13 RDPs, suggesting that Member States may not be using these resources efficiently.

Substantial Life+ funding made it possible for the FUTMON project to develop work on plot-based forest monitoring. LIFE+ resources, which are allocated competitively, are intended to support short-term, practice-based development and demonstration projects, and are not designed for long-term funding of an EU-wide, coherent forest monitoring system. The question of efficiency here concerns not the value of the project results in terms of LIFE+ objectives, but whether this fund was the most appropriate choice to fill the funding gap left by the repeal of the Forest Focus Regulation. The related EFFIS seems to be implemented efficiently at present, but it too relies on the voluntary co-operation of Member States, raising questions about the long-term security of the system both in terms of funding and quality and consistency of information. The more secure alternative would appear to be legislation, covering inter alia “forest fire prevention, incorporating funding for prevention plans and risk assessment, the European Forest Fires Information System (EFFIS), fire detection, infrastructure, training and education, and forest recovery after fires...”, as already called for in the European Parliament response to the Green Paper (European Parliament, 2011).

Conclusions

Over the timescale of implementing the EU Forest Action Plan several environmental issues became more prominent at both EU and Member State level, including the debate about the role of forests in combating climate change and the failure to meet the EU biodiversity targets, but the scope of the activities under Objective 2 had already been defined before this became apparent.

The Action Plan activities aimed at helping to meet the EU's international commitments on greenhouse gas reductions and adapting forests to a changing climate were mostly implemented effectively and efficiently, but there is little evidence of effective follow-up, particularly at Member State level. The publication in 2008 of a new study on the impacts of climate change on European forests and options for adaptation (EFI, 2008) was followed by information sharing and discussions within a working group of the Standing Forestry Committee, which issued a formal opinion on climate change and forestry in 2011. In contrast, improved co-operation between this Committee and the Council's expert group on carbon sinks was not achieved. Other activities reported by Member States, on raising awareness of climate change and addressing its impacts on forests, appear to have addressed the objectives of the Action Plan, but initiated in parallel rather than as a direct response to it.

The Objective 2 activities aimed at achieving the revised Community biodiversity objectives were focused on information sharing and evidence gathering and therefore unlikely to have little direct impact on the EU biodiversity targets. The report on Member States' experiences of implementing Natura 2000 in forest areas published by the SFC indicated active participation by at least some (but not a majority) of Member States, but there was no evidence of specific follow-up activity at EU level or by Member States collectively. After a promising start as regards information exchange between the forest and nature conservation authorities at Member State level, where the GreenForce network was seen as particularly useful, this activity seems to have faltered just at the time when new biodiversity targets for 2020 were being developed.

The process started by the Green Paper on forest protection and information (COM(2011)66) can be considered as an efficient response to information and monitoring issues arising under the EU Forest Action Plan, but its potential to drive a significant improvement of information and monitoring systems at EU and pan-European level is yet to be fulfilled. This will be a considerable challenge, and will depend on the commitment of Member States to taking forward the collective activity required, which at present is evident only in voluntary efforts by some Member States. In the case of the EFFIS these seem to be working well at present, but again the future is uncertain. The successful progress on the development of the European Forest Data Centre meets the Action Plan objectives but it is unclear if this is a response to the Action Plan or to other drivers, and the EFFIS

In the absence of specific funding allocations to implement the Action Plan a wide range of EU and some national funds have been used for Objective 2 activities but it is very difficult to identify what alternative resources might have been used, or to judge if the available resources were used efficiently. Of considerable concern, in the context of the failure to meet key EU forest biodiversity targets, is the evidence indicating by the EAFRD funds, which are the main source of support for forest level actions contributing to environmental objectives. The EAFRD funds have not being used as efficiently as possible by Member States during the 2007-2012 period.

EQ1.3 To what extent have the activities in the framework of the EU Forest Action Plan aimed to contribute to the quality of life by preserving and improving the social and cultural dimensions of forests (Key Actions 10-12) been effective and efficient?

The aim of the EU FAP Objective 3 is *to contribute to the quality of life by preserving and improving the social and cultural dimensions of forests*. As Figure 12 shows, Objective 3 included three Key Actions (KA) and seven activities. The goal was targeted with activities designed to encourage environmental education, to maintain and enhance the protective functions of forests, and to explore urban and peri-urban forests. Implementation was designed mainly for the latter part of the Action Plan (2009-2011).



Figure 12. Objective 3 activities and Intervention Logic.

To what extent did the activities carried out in Key Actions 10-12 lead to an effect and contributed to meeting its objective?

KEY ACTION 10. Encourage environmental education and information

Key Action 10 has contributed to improving knowledge about best practices in environmental educational and information through exchanges between Member States. Concrete measures to this aim have been the experience sharing in the Standing Forestry Committee meetings and specific workshops. In the ex-post evaluation surveys the Member State representatives give clearly positive feedback on these activities.

Key Action 10 activities related to encouraging environmental education and information have been carried out as indicated in the EU FAP work programme (see Chapter 2.3). The EU FAP work programme and the SFC annual work programmes have structured the exchange of information and experiences between Member States on forest-related information and education campaigns. The SFC meetings, additional meetings organised by Austria, presentation of Member State programmes, the study on public perception of forests in Europe, and briefing on the work of the UNECE/FAO Forest Communicators Network enabled transfer of information. Based on the ex-post evaluation surveys, Member States assess that the participants in these activities gained new information by learning about concrete and successful practices implemented in several Member States. A Standing Forestry Committee opinion on environmental education and information campaigns following the study on public perception was foreseen in the EU FAP work programme, but was finally not issued.

The evaluation surveys indicate that at Member State level, environmental education and information have an important role, and there is a rich and diverse list of activities reported (both for Key Action 10 and 18). Many of these activities were begun before the EU Forest Action Plan and they are running on an ongoing basis, in most cases under the umbrella of National Forest Programmes. Reported activities include certified training courses for forest pedagogues, a forest-related environmental programme, thousands of local events during the International Year of Forests, an annual "Forest Day", a "Going to the Forest School" programme for primary schools, forest education trails or a National Forest Conference illustrating the role of national forests in a European and global context. It is nevertheless difficult to make an explicit link between these activities and the EU FAP. The Member State survey responses do not specifically highlight that implementation of the EU FAP and exchange of practices in Key Action 10 led to a specific effect on the national activities. More direct impact can be seen from, for example, the UN International Year of Forests 2011, which was flagged in most Member State responses (see also Key Action 18).

Stakeholder involvement in the activities of Key Action 10 was not specifically investigated in the ex-post evaluation surveys. However, some stakeholder responses highlight the importance of education to address the perceived communication gap between rural and urban societies, and for example, to adapt the traditional messages about forests and forestry to the new needs of urban population and forest owners.

Considering that all Member States report activities related to environmental educational and information, and considering the positive feedback that Member States give for the information sharing within the framework of the EU FAP, it can be concluded that Key Action 5 has contributed to encouraging environmental education and information. Exchange in Member State practices can also be seen contributing to greater capacity of the participants in these meetings to design and implement forest education and information campaigns.

KEY ACTION 11. Maintain and enhance the protective functions of forests

The implementation of Key Action 11 has contributed to preserving and improving protective functions of forests in Europe, by exchange of experiences between Member States and the Commission, and a number of studies at the EU level. Importance of this theme has been high on the EU and national agendas, and the EU FAP has provided a useful framework supporting integration of forest protective functions within several policy processes, including the Commission Communication on Community approach on the prevention of natural and man-made disasters, the Green Paper on Forest Protection and Information, the proposed new rural development regulation, and the Biodiversity 2020 strategy.

The Standing Forestry Committee meetings have enabled exchanging Member State practices and information on protective functions of forests, such as identification of best practices and experiences on the fine-tuning of measures (e.g. high implementation rate, most significant impact, good stakeholder feedback). In the ex-post evaluation surveys, the Commission and Member State responses indicate a clear added value of these exchanges, which were also useful for the Green Paper on Forest Protection and Information process, and for the discussion on the post-2013 Rural Development regulation. A Standing Forestry Committee opinion on the enhancement of the protective functions of forests was foreseen in the EU FAP work programme, but it was not issued.

Various research projects and studies have been carried out on protective functions (see Chapter 2.3). It is nevertheless not possible to show to what extent the EU FAP affected the realisation of, for example, the studies by the Commission Services or EEA; the Action Plan is sometimes mentioned and sometimes not. Several Member States explicitly recognise the effectiveness of the exchange of national experiences and a direct effect on policy processes. Many activities are reported at Member State level. Regarding the specific aspect of forest fires (Key Action 9), the ex-post evaluation's survey responses related also to Objective 3 indicate common concern over the urgency of this issue and, on the other hand, also powerlessness from some Member States and stakeholders.

Natural hazards and disasters on forests have increased visibility of issues related to forest protective functions on the political agendas. This is a good example where external (climatic) events have raised the forest issue on the political agenda, and in that sense the EU FAP has provided a useful framework to channel and/or connect actors and initiatives, although the EU FAP itself was not the determining element. In the ex-post evaluations surveys, stakeholders mention adaptation and mitigation to climate change and ecosystem services as two issues of importance in the future; two aspects where the protective functions of forests play a critical role.

The forest protective functions can be seen integrated within several policy processes, including the Commission Communication on Community approach on the prevention of natural and man-made disasters, the above mentioned Green Paper and proposed new rural development regulation, as well as the Biodiversity 2020 strategy. Regarding the ultimate goal of this Key Action, it is yet to be seen if there is an impact on the maintenance and improvement of forests protective functions; the concrete actions in the Member States and at Community level will show it in a longer timeframe than the EU Forest Action Plan duration. It can nevertheless be concluded that EU FAP has been a means to encourage actors to implement policies and strategies to maintain and enhance the protective functions of forests.

KEY ACTION 12. Explore the potential of urban and peri-urban forests

Key Action 12 addressed the potential of urban and peri-urban forests in a workshop in 2011. The ex-post evaluation surveys indicate that, although the topic might not be of similar importance for all EU Member States, the issue of urban and peri-urban forests, ecosystem services provided and forests' impact on human health are important. The SFC ad hoc working group on the new forestry strategy is a possibility to discuss future actions with regard to this in the EU.

The activities implemented under this Key Action focused on a European workshop co-organised by the European Commission and the UK Forestry Commission (2011). There were representatives from 13 Member States and three Commission Services, along with other stakeholders and experts. The conference materials are available on the internet³² and the outcome was briefed to SFC and AGFC and transferred to the working group in charge of reviewing options for a new EU Forestry Strategy.

Urban and peri-urban forest issues are not high on agenda of all EU27 Member States, but in the ex-post evaluation surveys several Member States report on activities related to this topic (see Chapter 2.3). Urban and Peri-Urban Forestry (UPF) is an important issue at local level, especially for cities where forests constitute a vital green infrastructure. The legal competence for their management and protection often lies with the local authorities and the great variety of situations both in Europe and within countries makes it difficult to develop general support policies or an EU level action. There are, nevertheless, also examples of international activities; for example in the Mediterranean basin, the FAO has just recently created a workgroup on this topic. The topic of urban and peri-urban forests can be foreseen to increase in importance in the future, due to climate change impact, land use changes and human pressure, as indicated by several stakeholder and Member State representatives in the ex-post evaluation surveys.

This Key Action was implemented only in the end of the Action Plan period, thus its impact on implementation at national or EU level cannot be assessed at the stage of the ex-post evaluation. The SFC ad hoc working group on the new forestry strategy is a possibility to discuss future actions with regard to the urban and peri-urban forests in the EU.

To what extent were the activities under Key Actions 10-12 carried out efficiently?

There were no specific resources earmarked for the implementation of the EU FAP Objective 3 actions (Key Actions 10-12), but the local and regional activities in the Member States were carried out with national, as well as EU resources. Efficiency, and also effectiveness, could be supported by seeking synergies with pan-European networks in forest communication and urban forests.

Considering the timetable for implementing Objective 3 activities in 2010-2011 and a smaller number of activities at EU level, the social and cultural aspects of European forests seem to have been a somewhat lesser priority for an EU level implementation within the EU FAP than the economic or environmental dimensions (EU FAP Objectives 1 and 2). However, there were several activities reported in the evaluation surveys by Member States; the social and cultural dimensions of forests find their implementation more naturally at local and regional level than as an EU action. It is not possible to define whether or not the EU FAP triggered activities in Member States or gave additional support for local and regional activities. The connection to UNECE-FAO Forest Communicators Network (Key Action 10) was utilised to generate synergies and higher visibility for the EU FAP. The ex-post evaluation survey responses by Member State and stakeholder respondents illustrate that this pan-European connection could have been utilised even more for education and communication related activities. Considering

³² http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/fore/events/28-01-2011/index_en.htm

the many actors in pan-European networks for forest communication and for urban forests, the efficiency of an EU action could be increased by better synergy with existing structures.

On natural hazard prevention (Key Action 11), the EU FAP seems to have had a synergising effect as it is mentioned in several key documents that were also briefed to the Standing Forestry Committee and the Advisory Group on Forestry and Cork, and forest protective functions are now integrated in various ongoing policy processes at EU level. At the ex-post evaluation the division of forest disasters under Objective 2 Key Action 9 (forest fires) and Objective 3 Key Action 11 (e.g. flood prevention; combating desertification; avalanche control; soil erosion) seems to raise some confusion among the respondents. The Green Paper on Forest Protection and Information covered both EU FAP objective 2 and 3 aspects.

Regarding the urban dimension of forestry (Key Action 12), a greater involvement of for example the European Forum on Urban Forestry, or dissemination towards stakeholders could have increased efficiency and effectiveness. Dissemination beyond the forest sector and reaching experts, associations and networks of local authorities could in the future support defining also EU level action on urban and peri-urban forests. Furthermore, for example the Commission initiative on Green Infrastructures could be harnessed for elaborating the topic at EU level.

Conclusions

The EU FAP Objective 3 covers the social and cultural dimension of forests along with the economical aspects of Objective 1 and environmental aspects of Objective 2. The EU Forest Action Plan has contributed to the quality of life by activities encouraging environmental education and information, maintaining and enhancing the protective functions of forests and exploring the potential of urban and peri-urban forests. Socio-cultural aspects of forests are considered to a greater extent by national or regional policies and instruments than EU-level instruments. This is reflected in a smaller number of EU level activities for this EU Forest Action Plan Objective.

Education and information campaigns were discussed at several Standing Forestry Committee meetings and dissemination of Member State practices occurred through additional thematic seminars. Although no opinion was issued by the Committee as Member States' joint statement for environmental education, the activities were welcomed by the Member States, which indicates that the exchange of best practices led to increased capacities. Regarding the protective functions of forests, the forest fires, windstorms, drought and floods that occurred in the EU have focused public attention on the protective functions of forests, and the issue has been high on the EU and national agendas. The Forest Action Plan has provided a useful framework for interactions between Member States and the Commission Services, allowing forest protective functions to be discussed and integrated within several policy processes, including the Commission Communication on Community approach on the prevention of natural and man-made disasters, the Green Paper on Forest Protection and Information, the proposed new rural development regulation, and the Biodiversity 2020 strategy. Regarding Urban and Peri-Urban Forestry, most Member States report national and sub-national activities, and at the EU level a workshop was co-organised by the Commission and the UK Forestry Commission, drawing up-to-date and transferable conclusions.

Although most of the activities were carried out at national and regional level, the EU Forest Action Plan has been instrumental in maintaining the social and cultural aspects of forests on the forestry agenda, thus emphasising this important dimension of the European forests along with the economic and environmental dimensions of forests.

EQ1.4 To what extent have the activities in the framework of the EU Forest Action Plan aimed at fostering coordination and communication (Key Actions 13-18) been effective and efficient? Consider both aspects of co-operation between the Member States and Commission and at international level.

The aim of the EU FAP Objective 4 is *to improve coherence and cross-sectoral cooperation in order to balance economic, environmental and socio-cultural objectives at multiple organisational and institutional levels*. As Figure 13 shows, Objective 4 included six Key Actions (KA) and 17 activities. Activities were designed for the whole duration of the Action Plan in 2007-2011. Objective 4 is connected with the EU FAP Objectives 1-3, thus intending to support an efficient and effective implementation of the Action Plan, as well as to increase awareness on the benefits of Sustainable Forest Management.

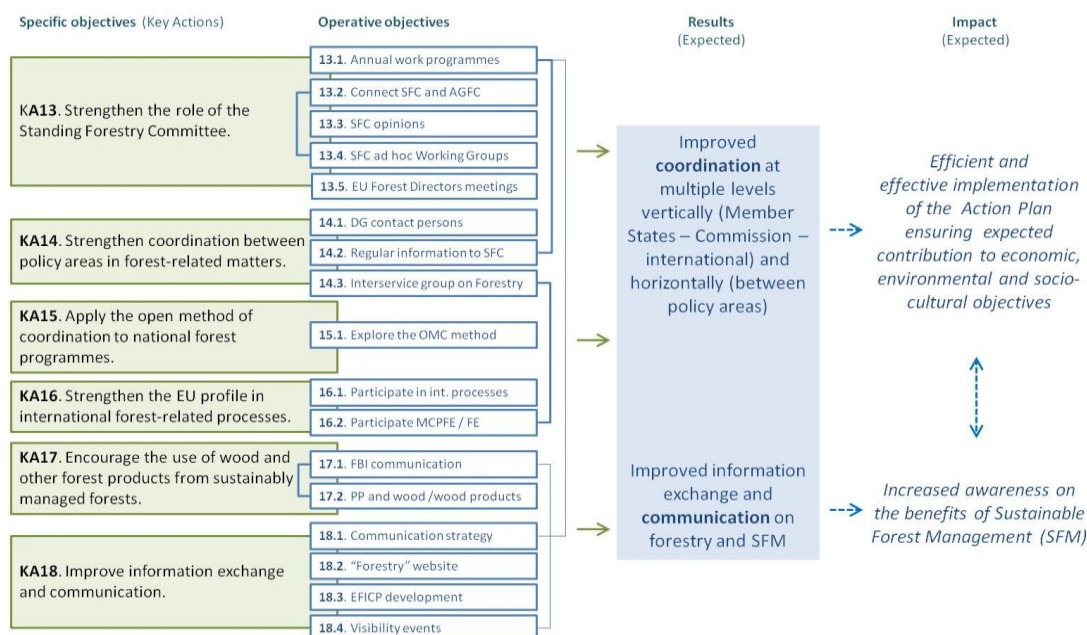


Figure 13 Objective 4 activities and Intervention Logic.

To what extent did the activities carried out in the Key Action lead to an effect and contributed to meeting its objective?

Key Action 13. Strengthen the role of the Standing Forestry Committee

Key Action 13 implementation has structured the exchange of information between the Commission and the Member States, and provided a platform for information sharing between the Member States. The EU FAP multiannual work programme, SFC ad hoc working groups and SFC opinions are concrete measures to strengthen the role of the Standing Forestry Committee, but leverage to Community and Member State level implementation is limited. The ex-post evaluation surveys indicate a need for joint stakeholder and Member State platforms.

Key Action 13 activities related to strengthening the role of the Standing Forestry Committee (SFC) have been carried out as indicated in the EU FAP work programme (see Chapter 2.3). As implementation of the Action Plan Objectives 1-3 shows, the EU FAP work programme and the annual work programmes during 2007-2011 have structured the SFC work, and given a framework for regular information sharing with Commission and a channel to the stakeholders through the Advisory Group on Forestry and Cork (AGFC). SFC opinions and ad hoc working groups have been introduced through the EU FAP implementation, and they can be seen as (a) a possibility to present Member States' joint views to EU level forestry related issues and

policy processes and (b) a possibility to combine technical expertise (involving also stakeholders) for specific questions related to forests and forestry. As also pointed out in the mid-term evaluation, the action plan does not foresee reporting of activities and steps taken towards the goals, such as follow-up of the SFC opinions. Neither are there means to force – or to induce for example by offering additional funding to – implementation in the Member States. This weakens the effectiveness of the Action Plan implementation. The achieved impacts of working group reports, conclusions and recommendations or SFC opinions remain vague as long as there is no concrete uptake at Community and Member State levels. The EU FAP evaluations at midterm and ex-post are a means for collecting a more comprehensive view on the activities and effects. The ex-post survey responses by Member State and Commission representatives indicate an indirect impact on several policy processes ongoing during 2007-2011 (e.g. rural development, forest biomass use for energy). To an extent this is also confirmed by the stakeholder responses, which do see the role of SFC strengthened due to the EU FAP. However, in general there were much higher expectations for the Action Plan; instead of reacting to processes ongoing in other sectors, to have a proactive approach, and instead of vague follow-up and implementation, to see concrete steps taken at the Community and Member State levels. This is expressed in the ex-post evaluation survey responses, although the EU Forestry Strategy (1998) definitions provide no grounds for such policy formulations.

The Member State representatives and stakeholders report in the ex-post evaluation surveys that although the information flow about the Commission initiatives is regular, the role of SFC (and AGFC) has not changed towards becoming more advisory, but the information comes at a stage when it is no longer possible to have an impact on the preparations under way. Neither are there explicit structures defined how the SFC opinions or the work carried out in the working groups could contribute to the Community level processes. The SFC opinions have no legal status, but are a way to produce joint views in Member States, in SFC and in the Commission, aside from the standing procedure through Council Conclusions.

For example, Bulgaria and Latvia report that special attention has been put also to stakeholder involvement at Member State level – an issue that was raised in the beginning of the EU FAP (in the AGFC meeting). At the same time, the stakeholder responses assess stakeholder involvement as still being critically in general, especially at the national level; exchange of views between SFC and AGFC representatives (e.g. joint meetings) would have been a channel to discuss further what is meant by stakeholder involvement in national forest programme processes. The EU FAP work programme 2007-2011 foresaw several topics that could have been handled in joint meetings, but only one SFC and AGFC joint meeting was arranged (the workshop on review of the EU Forestry Strategy in 2011). Although stakeholder involvement was strengthened by the AGFC chair participating in the SFC meetings, and by stakeholder participation in the SFC ad hoc working groups, the ex-post evaluation surveys indicate a wish for more interaction.

Key Action 14. Strengthen coordination between policy areas in forest-related matters

Key Action 14 implementation has improved coordination by structuring the exchange of information within the Commission and by ensuring regular information sharing to Member States (SFC) and stakeholders (AGFC). The ISGF has been beneficial for coordination and communication within Commission, related to preparation for the pan-European Forest Europe process, but there would be a need to assess the role of several ISGs on forestry related issues; on EU forestry on one hand, and on international forestry on the other hand.

Key Action 14 aims at improved coordination across policy areas within the Commission. Activities have been carried out as planned in the EU FAP work programme (see Chapter 2.3). The EU FAP is adding to the inter-services consultations and daily communication taking place within the Commission. The structures strengthened during EU FAP – the list of contact persons, regular meetings of the Interservices Group on Forests (ISGF) and the EU FAP work

programme structuring the information sharing and agendas for SFC (and AGFC) – have positively affected coordination and preparation within the Commission.

ISGF, established in 2001, has been active during 2007-2011 and the EU FAP has provided a framework for discussions and regular information sharing, thus addressing topics also outside the immediate EU FAP work programme. For example, the Commission work on policy options for the review of the EU legislation on the marketing seed and plant propagating material, and its implications to forest reproductive material was addressed in ISGF and brought for SFC discussion in meetings in 2010 and 2011. Assessment of effectiveness is undermined by the fact that the issues related to forestry are complex and interlinked. Division of the work within the Commission in the EU forestry issues (including pan-European Forest Europe process), and international forestry issues (including e.g. UNFF, UNFCCC, LULUCF, CBD) and then FLEGT and REDD as a third aspect keeps the different levels of forestry-related processes apart within the Commission processes. ISGF has coordinated the Commission preparations for the Forest Europe Ministerial (MCPFE) process. For example, assessment of a legally binding agreement on forests (LBA) impact on EU aquis has been started and ISGF has been the forum to share information and viewpoints on this between the Commission services. This approach taken in the ISGF is assessed by Commission representatives as an innovative way of utilising the inter-services group. It has provided a concrete step in improving participation in international processes (Key Action 16).

The documents related to the Commission inter-services consultations and the ISGF meeting minutes are not public. Although the ex-post evaluation survey responses by the Member State and stakeholder representatives indicate examples where cross-sectoral coordination could have been better, such as preparation of sustainability criteria for biomass parallel to defining other sustainability requirements for other wood products (Key Actions 4 and 17), both Member State and stakeholder responses perceive that coordination within the Commission has improved during the EU FAP implementation.

Key Action 15. Apply the open method of coordination (OMC) to national forest programmes

Although Key Action 15 has not been implemented, the fact that it is indicated as a Key Action in the EU FAP 2007-2011 has kept the Open Method of Coordination option on the agenda for entering into discussions about the future of the EU Forestry Strategy and possible Action Plan. At the stage of the ex-post evaluation, the investigations for a legally-binding agreement (LBA) on forests are ongoing in the pan-European Forest Europe process, as well as the options in the EU are investigated in the SFC ad hoc working group on review of forestry strategy.

Key Action 15 to investigate and apply OMC to national forest programmes has not been implemented as defined in the work programme 2007-2011, carrying out a preparatory work to indicate how OMC is applied in other policy areas and to discuss possible methodological framework for the application of forest policy. However, the SFC ad hoc working group on review of Forestry Strategy should contribute to the question of contents (issues to be addressed at EU level) as well as to the question of mechanisms (instrument) to support and underpin the implementation of forest-related policies at different levels. To support this discussion, in the working group third meeting there were two examples presented from strategies in other policy areas (e.g. Biodiversity Strategy and the Europe 2020 strategy) on how to make a strategy effective and to improve implementation of a voluntary instrument.

Key Action 16. Strengthen the EU profile in international forest-related processes

The impact of Key Action 16 on strengthening the EU profile in forest-related international processes during 2007-2011 is limited, and at best indirect. However, a concrete step forward in strengthening the preparedness in international processes is the work done in the Interservices Group on Forestry when preparing for the Commission participation in the Forest Europe (former MCPFE) process. Otherwise, EU forestry and international forestry issues are on separate agendas, due to the division of work in the Commission.

The activities in Key Action 16 have been carried out as indicated in the EU FAP work programme: there has been a continued follow-up and participation in international processes (see Chapter 2.3). The Commission has briefed SFC (and AGFC) about the developments and international meetings (see Key Action 6, Key Action 7). Furthermore, there have been concrete steps taken to improve participation in the Forest Europe (MCPFE) process: coherence between the Forest Europe and SFC ad hoc working groups has been improved by inviting Liaison unit representatives to SFC ad hoc working groups (Key Action 3 and 17), by information sharing between the forest communication strategy development at the pan-European level and in the EU (Key Action 18), and the ISGF coordination for Commission participation in the Forest Europe process (Key Action 14).

Preparation of EU positions for the international processes is led by presidencies and discussions held in respective Council Working Parties (WP) – for forestry mainly in WP on Forestry under the Agriculture and Fisheries Council (including Forest Europe, UNFF etc.). Also WP International Environmental Issues (ref. Biodiversity and Climate Change/LULUCF) under the Environment Council and WP Commodities under Foreign Policy (ref. FLEGT and trade) handle forest-related issues. A joint meeting of the WP on Forestry and the WP on International Environmental Issues was arranged on initiative of the Slovakian presidency in 2008. These preparations and steps take place outside the EU FAP structures – the international processes are ongoing parallel to EU FAP concentrating on EU forestry. However, in the ex-post evaluation surveys, some Member States indicate that the EU FAP framework (meetings and timetables) provided an additional support for the EU presidency duties, for example, during the Hungarian presidency in the first half of 2011 there were both the UNFF-9 session and the 6th Forest Europe ministerial conference in Oslo.

The EU FAP has been utilised only to a limited extent as an instrument to strengthen EU profile in international forest-related processes. Through the AGFC meetings stakeholders tried to promote a stronger visibility by the EU forest sector as a joint effort with regard the UNFCCC COP-15 meeting in Copenhagen in 2009. The SFC ad hoc WG on climate change and forestry was ongoing and the SFC opinion was concluded only in 2011. AGFC did not conclude a joint position to the climate change negotiations, but the European stakeholders were present in the meeting and for example forest owners (CEPF) together with pulp and paper industry (CEPI) made a joint press release “Forest-based industries – unique potential to fight climate change”.

The international processes take a long time, and often the steps taken are small. The ex-post evaluation does not find direct effects of the EU FAP implementation during 2007-2011 in strengthening the EU profile in the international forest-related processes. Rather the international forestry issues are handled parallel to the EU FAP implementation both in the Commission and in the Member States' preparations by presidencies and the Council WPs. There can be an indirect influence perceived with regard the preparedness at EU level to follow the developments in the pan-European Forest Europe process: in other words, the ISG on forestry facilitated coordination within the Commission (Key Action 14), and the Member States have had – at least in theory – possibility to use the SFC meetings (Key Action 13) as an additional forum outside the preparations in the Council WPF.

Key Action 17. Encourage the use of wood and other forest products from sustainably managed forests

Key Action 17 investigated and shared Member State practices on public procurement of wood and wood products; the SFC ad hoc working group report and recommendations are appreciated in the ex-post evaluation survey responses, although implementation of the recommendations remains a shared responsibility of the Commission and Member States. The ex-post evaluation surveys show that the work has influenced national processes related to public procurement policy, green public procurement guidelines and preparing for the EU Timber Regulation requirements, but this influence does not necessarily reach the whole EU27.

The activities in Key Action 17 have been carried out as indicated in the EU FAP work programme (see Chapter 2.3). The SFC ad hoc working group on public procurement of wood and wood-based products exchanged experiences between Member States, the Commission and stakeholders about different approaches applied in the Member States, as well as enhanced better understanding of technical and legal aspects. In the ex-post evaluation surveys, the working group and its report are valued for providing information and recommendations for action. Several Member States report that the EU FAP gave an additional driver for processes at Member State level, such as national timber procurement policy, degree on national GPP, and elaboration of tracking system on domestic wood / legality. One country also indicates that the work has contributed to improved coordination between forest-related policy areas at national level through improving a common understanding on the Key Action 17 area.

The working group was also expected to provide input for the preparation of more detailed guidance for the application of the principles of Green Public Procurement (GPP) to wood and wood-based products. The working group report is publicly available, but the ex-post evaluation surveys do not directly indicate whether it is (or will be) used for the process.

The EU Timber Regulation (EU No 995/2010) will be applied from 2013 March onwards. The regulation applies both to EU and imported timber. It emerged from the FLEGT Action Plan (COM(2003)251). The Commission presented the timber regulation / due diligence preparations to AGFC (and AC-FBI). SFC had no role as such, but the Member States' formal discussion on this topic took place in the Council Working Party on Forestry. At the stage of the ex-post evaluation, the Commission proposal for implementing regulation (COM(2012)1145) has just been published in February 2012, and there is no indication that the EU FAP framework is planned to be utilised for supporting the process by March 2013 and beyond. The working group on public procurement of wood and wood-based products (October 2010) addressed the issue of legality and sustainability, and recommended that *"all forest-related policies in the EU – such as Green Public Procurement (GPP), Renewable Energy (RES), FLEGT – should base their sustainability on a commonly accepted definition of and criteria for sustainable forest management and also legality requirements"*.

The EU FAP has been a means to underline the importance – both the prospects and challenges – of encouraging the use of wood and other forest products from sustainably managed forests, and to raise awareness on questions specific to the forestry and wood-processing sector. In the ex-post evaluation surveys some Member State as well as stakeholder representatives expressed their concern that there are several sustainability criteria and other development processes in the EU going on in parallel with regard to forest-based materials. At worst, this is seen to open a possibility for the existence of different requirements for forestry depending on the end use of the wood material (e.g. the GPP guidance on construction, paper and furniture, and the renewable energy sustainability recommendations for solid biomass for energy).

In addition to the activities indicated in the EU FAP work programme, various wood promotion campaigns and activities have been carried out and are ongoing by governments and wood

industry federations (e.g. ProWood or ProHolz), forest certification schemes (e.g. Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification PEFC, and Forest Stewardship Council FSC), and environmental NGOs (e.g. sustainable timber action by international association of local governments and their associations ICLEI in order to increase municipalities' awareness in procuring timber is based on the campaign initiated by WWF and Greenpeace). These activities are not part of the EU FAP but ongoing in parallel; whether EU FAP has provided an additional reference for developing these activities is not sure.

Key Action 18: Improve information exchange and communication

Key Action 18 implementation has been crucial in investigating and building up the basis for EU forest communication through a study on public perceptions of forests and forestry (2009) and a SFC ad hoc working group defining the EU forest communication strategy (2011). Concrete visibility and awareness raising events have been carried out in the Member States and contributed to national level mainly – thus an EU added value remains unattained. However, some Member States indicate improved visibility of the EU forest-related policies and increased awareness of the issue in the national policy on forests and nature.

The activities in Key Action 18 have been carried out as indicated in the EU FAP work programme (see Chapter 2.3). Development of forest information and monitoring has already been handled under Objective 2 (Key Action 8), thus including the follow-up of the European Forest Information and Communication Platform (EFICP).

The public perceptions study “*Shaping forest communication in the European Union: public perceptions of forests and forestry*” is referred to in several occasions, related to the UNECE/FAO Forest Communicators Network and Forest Europe communication strategy (ECORYS, 2009). It explored the opinions of the general public on forests and the forest sector in the EU in a concrete manner. Followed by the SFC ad hoc working group and the EU forest communication strategy (coherent with the above mentioned pan-European level parallel processes), the EU FAP has provided a valuable input to improve communication on European forests and on Sustainable Forest Management in Europe. The EU forest communication strategy concludes target groups, key messages and approach for forest communication. However, the actual implementation on these principles and measures remains a responsibility of the Commission, SFC and Member States. The strategy underlines that a periodic evaluation is needed to assess its impact and to help it adjust to changing circumstances. Also repeating the public perceptions survey (carried out in 2008/2009) is recommended. No specific point of reflection has been agreed at SFC. The ex-post evaluation surveys indicate concern among the Member State and stakeholder representatives how the strategy will be implemented when there seems to be little or no follow-up in promoting or using the strategy. In the ex-post evaluation surveys, several Member States report (see Key Actions 5 and 10) that – although the forest communication events are ongoing at national level without any EU FAP – the information sharing through EU FAP framework has resulted in increased emphases on SFM, environmental education and information measures, as well as improved visibility of EU forest-related policies and awareness of the issue in the national policy on forests and nature. This can be seen as an effect from the implementation of the EU FAP as a whole. An effective implementation of the EU forest communication strategy would be a means to strengthen this impact.

The Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development website for “*Forestry measures*”³³ has been updated through 2007-2011 including also key materials of EU FAP implementation. In addition to this, several studies commissioned by the Commission and other relevant material are to be found in respective Directorate-General website (e.g. “*EU forests and forest-related policies*”³⁴ by Directorate General for Environment, “*Forests and*

³³ http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/fore/index_en.htm

³⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/forests/home_en.htm

*agriculture*³⁵ by Directorate General for Climate Action, “*JRC FOREST Action Website*”³⁶, “*Seeds and plant propagating material – forestry*”³⁷ by Directorate General for Health and Consumers and “*Forest-based Industries: Wood, Paper, Printing*”³⁸ by Directorate General for Enterprise and Industry). Furthermore, the Eurostat forestry statistics pocket book has been updated, and several materials have been produced in FP7 projects or by the EEA. These materials are available for an active information seeker, in other word a person who knows what and where to look for the information is required. The EU FAP has contributed to better awareness of the information and research results available by presenting FP7 and other project results to the SFC – thus, targeting the Member State representatives for forestry issues. Based on the ex-post evaluation it is not possible to conclude leverage to wider audiences, but it is likely that the communication has remained mainly within the forestry sector. However, it is known that some FP7 projects have produced dissemination materials on forest research results specifically for policy and decision makers, but also to the general public (e.g. MOTIVE project).

Visibility events and activities are ongoing in the Member States on regular basis. The mid-term evaluation pointed out that the added value at the EU level remains to a large extent unattained when visibility events do not have an element to connect with the EU FAP and the goals defined at the EU level. The ex-post evaluation surveys repeat this observation. The impact of the EU FAP on promoting a concept of European or EU forests has been modest. The Forest Days, Forest Weeks and other visibility events at local, regional and national levels address forests in a local framework. The definition of a European forest and the increasing awareness about European forests would benefit from continuous close cooperation between EU and the pan-European efforts in this respect. Although forests vary across the EU – it is perhaps the varying landscape of forests that is the very essence of European forests. So far, the EU FAP has not defined this as an EU added value, and for Member States the main interest has been in reaching the local inhabitants and target groups with the forest communication measures.

To what extent were the activities under Key Actions (13-18) carried out efficiently?

There were no specific resources earmarked for implementation of the EU FAP Objective 4 (Key Actions 13-18), but the EU resources were utilised for meetings, Standing Forestry Committee ad hoc working groups and for example studies commissioned by the Commission. At the Member State level national – but for the communication measures also regional – funds were mobilised. Efficiency of activities is dependent on the leverage to Member State and Community level implementation also beyond the duration of the Action Plan.

Assessment of efficiency is dependent on the resources used and the results and effects achieved. EU FAP is a voluntary coordination and cooperation instrument and implementation of the action plan as well as the uptake of its results is a shared responsibility between the Commission and the Member States. Taking this into account the Key Action 13-18 activities have been efficient in using the existing structures (SFC, AGFC, and ISGF) to define and implement the Action Plan and its work programme.

The organisational set-up of the EU FAP will be assessed in detail in the Evaluation Question 5, but it can be briefly concluded for Key Action 13 (SFC and Member States) and Key Action 14 (ISGF and coordination within the Commission) that the Action Plan and its annual work programmes provided concrete framework for 2007-2011 and were a basis for building an efficient implementation. Assessing efficiency of the measures to strengthen the EU role in international forest-related processes (Key Action 16) is difficult – except what is already said about the ISGF role with regard to preparations within the Commission for the Forest Europe

³⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/forests/index_en.htm

³⁶ <http://forest.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>

³⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/propagation/forestry/index_en.htm

³⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/wood-paper-printing/index_en.htm

process. The EU forestry issues are on a separate agenda from international forestry issues, although when considering the example of the EU Timber Regulation this raises concerns as regards the efficiency and effectiveness of this division (see chapter 2.3 for Key Action 16, and the above analysis for Key Action 17).

It is not clear what are the concrete synergies generated by implementing the EU FAP and the Communication on innovative and sustainable F-BI (Key Action 17) in parallel in 2008-2011. In order to assess this, also the implementation of the two Action Plans would have needed to be evaluated in parallel, preferably also looking more in detail into the EU FLEGT Action Plan with relevant actions (especially the EU Timber Regulation and its implementation regulations).

The concrete outputs from exchanging information on public procurement of wood and wood-based products across EU Member States (Key Action 17), and for defining EU forest communication (Key Action 18) are assessed in the ex-post evaluation surveys as very useful results of the Action Plan. At the stage of the ex-post evaluation, efficiency is undermined by a limited uptake of the outputs and results produced in the Action Plan; efficiency would be improved with a more structured dissemination of the results (e.g. the SFC ad hoc working group reports and recommendations, studies on several topics within the EU FAP framework, and the SFC opinions and AGFC resolutions), and concrete milestones to follow-up the effects at Member State and Community levels. Such steps also after the completion of the Action Plan in 2011 could be means to improve efficiency of the time and resources used for the EU FAP implementation.

Conclusions

The EU FAP Objective 4 is cross-sectoral to the whole Action Plan and its implementation. The fact that Objective 4 has been raised as a separate heading in the Action Plan – in parallel to the economic, environmental and socio-cultural objectives of the EU FAP – underlines the importance of improving coordination and communication as a specific goal for the EU FAP.

Although providing concrete evidence on the effects of fostering coordination and communication at the Community or Member State levels is challenging, the EU Forest Action Plan activities (Key Actions 13-18) have contributed to this aim by providing a structure and mechanisms for the implementation of the Action Plan. The multiannual work programme and regular meetings of the Standing Forestry Committee have improved coordination between Member States and the Commission, as well as cooperation between the Member States. A more structured coordination (e.g. through an Open Method of Coordination approach) of the national forest programmes across EU27 has not been achieved, but there has been information exchange and collection of technical expertise on the topics raised in the Action Plan work programme, the Standing Forestry Committee meetings and ad hoc working groups. The Interservices Group on Forestry has improved coordination within the Commission by providing regular meetings and using the Action Plan for structured information exchange about forest-related initiatives in the Commission. Effect on a higher EU profile in international processes related to forests has been limited, but the Action Plan has provided means for seeking synergies between the EU and pan-European processes, and there has been more structured preparation for the Forest Europe process.

With regard to improving communication on benefits of Sustainable Forest Management, a number of concrete outputs have been produced. A Standing Forestry Committee ad hoc working group shared technical and legal expertise on public procurement of wood and wood products, and the working group report proposes concrete follow-up steps to target also for a more harmonious approach across EU27. The ex-post evaluation surveys show that the work has had influence on national processes related to public procurement policies, green public procurement guidelines and preparing for the timber regulation requirements, but this influence does not necessarily reach the whole EU27. The Communication on sustainable and innovative forest-based industry and the FLEGT Action Plan have been implemented in parallel to the EU Forest Action Plan. As an EU forest communication strategy, a study on

public perceptions on forests in the EU was carried out in 2009. The communication strategy was compiled in a Standing Forestry Committee ad hoc working group (2011), which defines principles, target groups and main messages for communication of benefits of sustainable forest management. The implementation of the communication strategy is a shared responsibility of the Commission and the Member States.

The EU FAP structures (work programme 2007-2011) and mechanisms (SFC, AGFC, ISGF) can already be seen as an added value compared with the situation when there was no Action Plan but activities were carried out on ad hoc basis or as individual efforts. The Action Plan provided a means to information sharing across a complex policy framework with various sectors affecting forestry in the EU and implementation of forest policies at Member State level. However, the plan remains merely a plan, if the results are not taken up to Community and Member State levels. Efficiency and effectiveness of activities is dependent on the leverage to Member State and Community level implementation also beyond the duration of the Action Plan.

Key lessons learned and open questions as food for thought for elaborating possible follow-up of the Action Plan:

- The EU FAP has been a framework to inform and to be informed, and as such has provided a structure to be better prepared to changing situations, and increase awareness and understanding of interlinkages and interconnections between developments in parallel policy processes (different levels, different sectors). This impact has remained mainly within the leading actors implementing the EU FAP and within the forestry sector. *Is there a way to reach beyond the forest sector players:*
 - *In the Member States, contacts and channels beyond the SCF forestry experts to disseminate the EU FAP results, but also to inform and keep informed when preparing for Community level developments and processes (e.g. agriculture and rural development, nature conservation, climate action, energy)?*
 - *To other sectors relevant to forestry in order to increase awareness of the forestry-related issues as well as availability of expertise when preparing initiatives that will affect forestry in the EU?*
 - *To decision and policy makers as well as to general public in order to increase awareness on forestry-related issues and challenges ahead?*
- Through the implementation of the EU FAP several concrete outputs have been produced (e.g. reports, studies, working groups), but the uptake at Member State and Community levels remains weak, and there are no follow-up milestones agreed. Now activities in the Member States (also at regional and cross-border levels) are often understood as something parallel to the EU FAP implementation, and their contribution to the EU level goals remains unrecognised and, as such also unattained. *Is there a way to strengthen utilisation of the outputs produced and ensure follow-up and visibility of the achievements after 2011?*
- Connection to research in the implementation of the EU FAP has been positive: the EU FAP has had input to FP7 calls and definitions, and several research projects as well as studies commissioned by the Commission have been carried out to support the Action Plan implementation. Studies and research results have also been presented to the SFC (and AGFC) contributing to a good basis for discussions and serving as raising awareness of wider audiences too on climate change impacts on forests, forest protective functions or valuation of non-marketed forest goods. *Is there a way to continue this good practice, and are there similar mechanisms for science-policy-practice interplay at the Member State level (NFP implementation)?*

(4) The EU FAP implementation includes a goal to strengthening the EU profile in international forest-related processes. During 2007-2011 there have been steps taken to improve EU participation in and to create synergies with the pan-European Forest Europe process, but otherwise international forestry issues have remained as a separate agenda compared with

the EU forestry issues. *Is there a need to re-assess the interplay of EU forestry issues and the international forestry issues and/or strengthen a more proactive assessment of the challenges ahead for forestry in Europe due to the international processes?*

(5) The EU FAP concluded the EU forest communication strategy in 2011, including several points which could have been utilised in implementation of the EU FAP through its whole 5-year period, but which also can be utilised when disseminating the EU FAP results and achievements at the stage of concluding the Action Plan. The communication measures can be the glue to connect the different levels of implementation together, make achievements more visible for other sectors and to wider audiences. *Is there a way to support and follow-up the implementation of the EU forest communication strategy after 2011?*

4.1.2 EQ2: To what extent have the activities in the framework of the EU Forest Action Plan contributed to the improvement of coherence and cross-sectoral co-operation in implementing the EU Forestry Strategy?

The EU Forestry Strategy states that forest policy lies in the competence of the Member States, but that the EU can contribute to the implementation of Sustainable Forest Management through common policies. The EU FAP aims at providing a coherent framework for the implementation of forest-related actions at Community and Member State level and serve as an instrument of coordination between different Community actions as well as between Community actions and forest priorities in the Member States. When preparing the EU FAP for operationalising the EU Forestry Strategy principles into Key Actions and activities, the reference points were the Lisbon and Gothenburg objectives, and at the stage of the ex-post evaluation of EU FAP these goals are defined in the Europe 2020 strategy.

With its objectives 1 to 3 – economic, environmental and socio-cultural – the EU FAP covers a whole variety of policy areas related to forests and forestry. Furthermore Objective 4 is specifically dedicated to improving coordination and communication at multiple levels (Member States, Community and international). This evaluation question focuses on the EU FAP contribution to coherence and cross-sectoral cooperation in implementing the EU Forestry Strategy.

Coherence refers to the extent to which the EU FAP activities are not contradicting across horizontal and vertical levels, but contribute to the goals and objectives of the EU Forestry Strategy. Coherence is assessed at: (1) horizontal level: across relevant policy areas at EU and Member State level, and (2) vertical level: between international, EU and Member State levels. It is thus understood as the extent to which the intervention does not contradict, but rather enhances and contributes to other interventions, which are targeting the sector.

Cross-sectoral cooperation is understood as cooperation between policy areas of relevance to the forest sector. Following the analysis of the Key Actions in the previous chapter, these policy areas include agriculture and rural development, environment, climate, trade, research and technology development, regional development, industry, development cooperation, energy and climate action.

In order to cover all these aspects in the ex-post evaluation analysis, the response to the Evaluation Question 2 is structured under three sub-titles:

- 1) *Did the EU FAP activities have an impact on relevant EU policies?*
- 2) *Did the EU FAP activities have an impact on National Forest Programmes?*
- 3) *Did the EU FAP activities have an impact on cooperation in improving coherence, complementarities, and coordination of activities?*

Each sub-question starts with a short summary (text boxes) of the key findings of the evaluation.

Did the EU FAP activities have an impact on relevant EU policies?

The influence of the EU FAP on EU policies, being a voluntary instrument, has been indirect. In other words, the Action Plan has been a means for information-sharing and providing an agenda for raising awareness and understanding about the forest-related issues across policy areas. The evaluation surveys indicate that although there were expectations of a more proactive and holistic approach to forestry-related issues in the EU, the EU FAP has at its best been able to react to developments ongoing in other policy areas, such as in the field of renewable energy. However, a positive impact can be seen on the EU FAP on the FP7 implementation for forest and forest sector research, as well as on addressing forestry measures in the preparation of the new rural development regulation of the CAP and the post-2013 financial framework.

As described in the analysis of implementation of the Action Plan and its effectiveness and efficiency in contributing to the specific objectives (EQ1), the EU FAP has been a means to share information about developments within the EU forestry as well as in relevant other sectors: energy, research and technological development, environment, nature conservation and biodiversity, climate action, disaster management and prevention (natural and man-made hazards), industry, international processes and public procurement. Since the EU FAP is a voluntary instrument, its influence on legally-binding processes in other sectors at the EU level is limited: it can provide a point of reflection, means for increasing awareness on impact of target setting and requirements set in other policy areas, and for improving understanding of the cross-sectoral character of forest and forestry-related issues in the EU. These aspects of *indirect influence* address both the actors within the forestry sector and in other sectors; in other words, keeping the forestry sector actors aware that there are processes in other sectors to keep an eye on, and making the other sector actors aware that the sectoral issues affect forestry in the Member States and consequently, have a bearing to the goals set at the EU level for competitiveness, environment and social aspects. The ex-post evaluation surveys give feedback that this has to an extent happened: the EU FAP and its work programme has been a means to influence the forestry sector, and keep the forestry issues to a certain extent on the agendas of other policies too.

In the ex-post evaluation surveys, the Member State and stakeholder responses see a *positive connection* to FP7 implementation as well as to the preparation of the new rural development regulation. Furthermore, some Member State respondents see this also with respect to international processes.

Strengthening the position of forest-related research in FP7 and increased input for **forest research and forest-based sector in RTD** has been reflected specifically in the EU FAP Objective 1 aiming at contributing to long-term competitiveness, but research exercises have also supported the other EU FAP objectives (e.g. research on climate change, natural hazards, protective functions of forests, ecosystem services). Parallel to the EU FAP, the European Technology Platforms process (including also the establishment of the Forest-based sector Technology Platform FTP in 2006) has encouraged improving cooperation across the European Technology Platforms (IDEA Consult, 2008), and the FPT responded to this in cooperation with other knowledge-based bioeconomy technology platforms (BECOTEPS project, including a white paper on “The European Bioeconomy in 2030”). These developments are parallel to the EU FAP, but all strengthening the forest sector role in RTD and innovation, as well as the sector’s contribution to the bioeconomy and green economy aspirations in Europe. Furthermore, ERA-NETs, COST scientific cooperation and EFI international organisation process for forestry research at European level have worked towards lessening fragmentation of research and development resources across Europe (including the aim to mobilise also national resources and private sector involvement). Thus, at the same time as the EU FAP addressed these issues, in Key Action 2 encouraging RTD to enhance competitiveness, the parallel processes directed the development towards the same goals. Furthermore, even if there was no Community forest science forum established as

foreseen under Key Action 2, sharing of research results to the Standing Forestry Committee during the EU FAP implementation can be seen as a measure to improve the science-policy interface at the EU level. The effects of the discussions within the SFC, however, are clearly limited when compared to a forest science forum as foreseen in the EU FAP because the forum would reach a considerably broader audience, and could also work towards strengthening an interdisciplinary approach and innovation input from outside the traditional forest sector.

The Member State and stakeholder responses in the ex-post evaluation surveys confirm that the EU FAP could be used as a frame of reference when applying for funding, and the EU FAP can be seen as providing an important framework to drive research on forest-related issues. At the stage of ex-post evaluation, this can be seen – even if it was an indirect influence and together with other factors directing the development towards the same direction – in the Horizon 2020, the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation 2014-2020 (COM(2011) 808 and COM(2011) 809). The proposal recognises the “Forestry Action Plan”, and under the societal challenges, which the new framework programme will address, it pinpoints forestry – together with the agriculture and fisheries sector and the bio-based industries – as a major sector underpinning the bio-economy, and it mentions forests under climate action, resource efficiency and raw materials from the viewpoint of ecosystems resilience.

The ex-post evaluation surveys indicate that there was a positive impact of the EU FAP in the preparation of the **new rural development regulation**, such as the Commission analysis of implementation of current forestry measures in the Rural Development Programmes in 2008, the SFC opinion, sharing experience in SFC between Member States and information sharing within the Commission as well as briefings to the SFC on the regulation preparations. This is confirmed by the Commission: the SFC opinion was utilised in discussions linked to CAP reforms in the next multi-annual financial framework. In the SFC meetings in 2011, several points were still raised with regard to the preparations of the post-2013 rural policy, such as competitiveness, State Aid related questions and payments for ecosystem services.

For Objective 2 on enhancing the environment, it remains unclear to what extent this referred specifically to the forest-environment and Natura 2000 compensation measures, which are targeted at forest biodiversity, although discussions seem to have taken place on a suggested new EAFRD-funded measure for in situ and ex situ conservation of forest genetic resources to help address the challenge of adaptation to climate change. The high frequency with which relevant national LIFE+ projects were mentioned by Member States in the ex-post evaluation surveys can be seen as an indication of the importance of the instrument in financing forest relevant projects. In the new LIFE proposal forest ecosystems are covered by the nature and biodiversity strand, but issues such as forest protection and monitoring are not addressed specifically.

A wider range of Member States argues that the actual effect of discussions and exchange of information on EU policies in SFC is difficult to measure. The lack of examples provided by Member States other than the before mentioned SFC opinion might hint at the fact that little is known of impacts outside the forestry sector. This concern was also raised in interviews with Commission services, where the feeling was expressed that the EU FAP had little influence on decisions outside forests/forestry administrations. As an example, the **Renewable Energy Directive** (Directive 2009/28/EC) was brought forward. All in all, the impact on bioenergy policies is assessed in the evaluation survey responses (by Member State, stakeholder and Commission representatives) both positive and negative – this can to an extent be explained by the fact that respondents represent both production and protection viewpoints, and the renewable energy field does raise both opportunities and challenges for forestry and the forest sector. The development of sustainability criteria for different biomass uses (for energy on one hand, but then also for other end-uses of wood in GPP pilot areas) is an example where the EU FAP did not succeed to improve policy coherence between parallel processes taking place in different policy areas. The Commission, however, indicates that the work carried out in the

EU FAP, in the SFC ad hoc working group on climate change and forests, and the wood mobilisation guidelines, have been and are used in on-going discussions on biomass and bioenergy.

Other policy areas where the ex-post evaluation surveys see an influence to EU-level policies are: discussions about LULUCF reporting and the new EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 – although particularly in relation to climate change some actors expressed that they could not think of any specific use of the EU FAP *to drive* related policy decisions. Furthermore, Member State survey respondents perceive improved coordination within the Commission (e.g. better information flow between Commission Services) making the forestry-related issues visible in sectoral discussions about Green Public Procurement, Green Paper on forest protection and information, competitiveness aspects, and disaster management and prevention. At the same time the responses emphasise that although making forest sector players more aware of these developments, the forestry / forest sector dialogue in the EU FAP has remained *within the forest sector* and not fully reached other sectors. The parallel processes (e.g. Key Action 17 promoting use of wood, and the EU goals for sustainable consumption and production) can be seen in line with each other, but some developments may lead to contradictory results (e.g. promotion of wood mobilisation for energy use vs. environmental biodiversity targets; or, different sustainability criteria for different end-uses of forest-based products). The impact of the EU FAP in these respects has been limited to a possibly increased awareness of these concerns because the matter was raised to attention through the implementation of the EU FAP.

As a general aspect, Member State and stakeholder responses emphasise that it has been beneficial to repeat the need for a better coordination between policy areas throughout the EU FAP implementation – the Action Plan was a means to *make these concerns visible*. For example, several stakeholders highlighted that the EU FAP was used as a reference (both in positive and negative terms) to increase the level of activities related to environmental policy.

When counter-checking the feedback above to the extent that the EU FAP is *mentioned* in some recent important policy developments related to environmental objectives, it can be pointed out that both the Communication on the new **EU Biodiversity Strategy** (COM(2011)244) as well as its impact assessment briefly mention the action plan. This refers to the development of options on target 3 of the strategy, which addresses the forestry sector specifically and emphasises the importance given to biodiversity by the EU FAP. The strategy also provides a short overview of the likely contribution of the plan in achieving the 2020 EU biodiversity target, emphasising the potential link to forestry measures under the CAP, but also highlighting the risk of insufficient integration of biodiversity considerations into forest management. The role of the EU FAP in contributing to the achievement of the targets set by the **6th Community Environment Action Programme** (EAP) has also been analysed in the framework of an assessment commissioned by the Commission (Ecologic et al. 2011). It concluded that *'although increased coordination seems to have taken place, forest protection measures remain spread across different policy sectors and continue to be a major point of conflict which has not been solved by the FAP. This inconsistent and fragmentary approach to the forestry sector has restrained the effectiveness of the coordination and thus the ability to meet the 6EAP priority action of encouraging effective coordination between all policy sectors involved in forestry.'* Potential was seen in the adoption of the 2010 Green Paper on forest protection and information, in contributing to the priority action of encouraging consideration of climate change effects in forestry. As regards references to the EU FAP in recent relevant policy developments on climate change, the **proposed Decision on LULUCF accounting** (COM(2012)94), the related Impact Assessment (SWD (2012) 41) and the Communication (COM (2012) 93) make no reference to the Action Plan or the EU Forestry Strategy.

The same applies to the Roadmap towards a Low Carbon Economy (COM(2011)112) and the Roadmap for a Resource-efficient Europe (COM(2011)571), as part of the **Europe 2020 Strategy** (COM(2010)2020): no reference is made to the EU FAP. Actually, in the Resource-Efficient Europe Roadmap forests are mentioned only with respect to the EU international

involvement questions about deforestation and the Rio+ process (COM(2011)363). The *contribution of EU forests and the EU forest sector* to the strategic goals of the Europe 2020 strategy are not fully recognised. Although renewable resources are addressed in the strategy and it can be seen to increase demands for forests and forest resources as well, the full value of Sustainable Forest Management – covering all economic, environmental and socio-cultural aspects – remains little known outside the core forest sector. Specifically, in the **bioeconomy strategy** (COM(2012)60) forests are addressed mainly as a raw material base without full consideration of the forests' ecological and other functions addressed in Sustainable Forest Management.

Parallel to the EU FAP goal to promote wood from sustainably managed forests (Key Action 17), there are other strategies directing Europe towards sustainable use of renewable resources. The **Lead Market Initiative** (COM(2007)860) included demand-based measures – regulation, public procurement, standardisation and supporting activities – to lower barriers in order to bring new products or services onto the market. There are at least three Lead Market Initiative areas relevant for the forest sector: sustainable construction, renewable energy sources, and bio-based products. With the Europe 2020 strategy, and the resource efficiency initiative, efficient resource use as well as the need for innovations in this field is underlined. The processes can be seen to increase demand for natural resources – including finding ways to promote more use of renewable, low-carbon resources, such as forest-based resources – and consequently also increasing the need for defining the sustainable use of these resources in a consistent way. The Lead Market Initiative, raw materials initiative etc. have been discussed with the AC-FBI stakeholders in the events arranged by the Commission in the framework of the innovative and sustainable F-BI Communication (COM(2008)113). The Commission has briefed these developments, as well as the state of the play of the economic situation of the F-BI, to the SFC in 2009-2011. Otherwise the EU FAP concentrates more on the supply side, while the role of forestry to the Europe 2020 strategy goals would call for a *holistic* approach to raise awareness of the general public and the key decision makers about the sector and its sustainable development – thus about the importance of ensuring resilience of forest ecosystems, sustainable use of forest resources, economic basis for developing the rural livelihoods as well as innovations in the processing and services sectors, and the contribution of forests for society at large (incl. human health, recreation etc.).

The ex-post evaluation survey responses by Member State and stakeholder respondents show that – although in the beginning of the EU FAP implementation there were expectations of a *more proactive and holistic approach* to forestry related issues in the EU – the EU FAP has at its best been able to react to ongoing developments in other policy areas, in energy and renewable energy targets, or in sustainable consumption and production (green procurement, but also social criteria). Although the ex-post evaluation survey respondents seem to share the view that forests are in a key role in responding to the challenges expressed in the Europe 2020 strategy, there have been no means to raise political interest to forests. After the disastrous forest fires of 2007 (Greece) and 2009 (Portugal and Spain) and windstorms Kyrill (2007), Klaus (2009) and Xynthia (2010), the public and political interest led to recognition of the problem and the need to define and strengthen means at EU level to address these challenges (e.g. information basis, disaster prevention and mitigation, temporary market regulations, territorial cooperation, or rural development instruments). There has not been similar urgency for other forest-related issues. In order to ensure leverage to other policy areas, suitable timing and influence channels have been crucial to deliver SFC opinions or SFC ad hoc working group reports to processes ongoing at the EU level. The EU FAP influence has been successful when there are also other processes ongoing to direct the developments towards a shared goal.

Did the EU FAP activities have an impact on National Forest Programmes?

The EU FAP has to an extent influenced national forest programmes, but the approach varies from one country to another based on the goals defined in a particular Member State. There are countries that more or less aim to comply with the EU FAP, and in the other extreme, there are countries which emphasise that the activities and priorities have been included in the national agendas well before the EU Action Plan existed. Influence on horizontal cooperation within Member States – between policy areas – is assessed critically especially in stakeholder responses to the ex-post evaluation surveys. However, the ex-post evaluation investigations show at least indirect influence in this respect too: the EU FAP has provided the Member States with an additional driver to, for example, highlight forestry measures in rural development programmes, address forest-based resources in bioenergy strategies or include wood and wood products in public procurement guidelines.

The ex-post evaluation survey results show that the EU FAP has had an impact on National Forest Programmes (NFP) and in effect national forest policy. As can be seen in Figure 14, seventeen out of the 24 Member State (one Member State chose not to respond to this question) responses thought that the implementation of EU FAP had an impact on national forest programmes or other forest-related policies in their country. It was used as a basis for the development of NFPs, as a reference point for forest development plans or other similar activities. Most countries stated that these refer to the different objectives of the EU FAP. What is not included in the figure below is the extent to which the EU FAP has had an impact at the national level, or how the NFPs have been implemented, and which results have been produced on economic, environmental and socio-cultural goals.

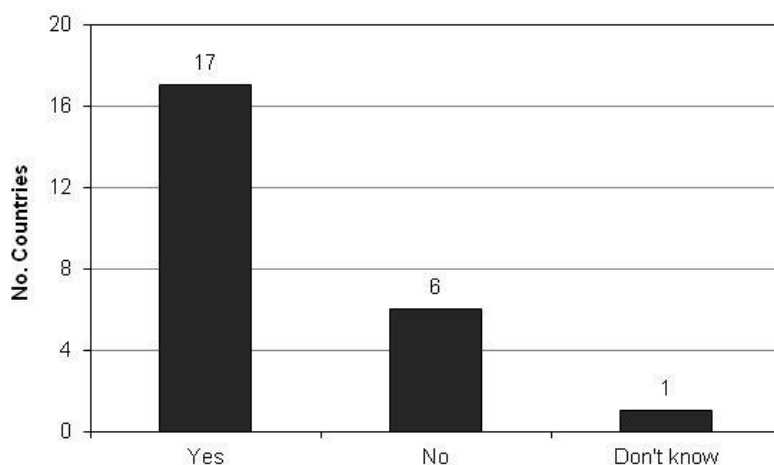


Figure 14 Did the implementation of the EU FAP have an impact on national forest programmes, or other forest-related policies at national level?

The EU FAP is a voluntary instrument, and its impact on national forest programmes or other forest-related policies in Member States varies depending on the goals and approaches taken in the Member States. Three groups of countries can be distinguished. There are countries where the EU FAP had a substantial impact when a *high compliance* between the EU and national strategies or action plans was aimed at. A few countries indicated that the EU FAP was taken as a basis for defining a structure or concrete measures in national strategy, national forest programme or development strategy for forest sector, and cross-references are made between the EU and national level document as well as implementation during 2007-2011. The fact that particularly the East and South-Eastern EU Member States used the EU FAP for shaping their NFP structure and measures may be due to the fact that in these

countries development and implementation of the EU FAP and NFPs went side by side, and as such, the EU FAP Key Actions supported NFP definitions and implementation.

More indirect impact is found in a second group of countries, which see national processes more independent from the EU level goals. In the evaluation surveys, most Member States report (approximately fifteen responses) that the EU FAP has been utilised as a *reference point* to check and/or update the national strategies. To an extent, the EU FAP was an additional driver to some national processes in preparing development plans, carrying out evaluation of strategies, highlighting communication and education measures in NFP, fostering cooperation and participation through NFPs, addressing the role of ecosystem services and non-wood forest goods and services, supporting forest owners' cooperation and advisory services, and enhancing the awareness for the socio-economic role of forestry. The same was mentioned regarding the inclusion of forestry measures in Rural Development programmes; national timber procurement policy; elaboration of tracking system on domestic wood; degree on national Green Public Procurement; framework for defining a bioenergy strategy related to forest sector; and overall contribution to a more holistic approach to the national forest policy, including a better understanding of challenges and opportunities for the forestry sector.

The third group of Member States indicates that there was no added value and neither was any added value expected from the EU-level Action Plan. These Member States underline that the EU FAP was a way to enhance coordination and policy formulation on *community* policies affecting the forest sector, and not directly reflecting to national forest-related policies.

Except for these points described above, the Member State responses do not provide systematic information on the influence of the specific Key Actions on the design and implementation of national forest(ry) programmes. Neither does the above comparison of countries reveal anything about the actual implementation of the NFPs: even though the EU FAP gave a structure to share Member States' practices on several topics at the EU level, there is no information sharing about how effectively the NFPs have been implemented in the EU Member States, and how the results achieved at national levels sum up as contributions for the EU level goals on, for instance, increasing stakeholder involvement, enhancing forest owner education and training, or protecting the environment.

In the surveys, the Member States indicate that they have benefited from the information sharing on *national solutions* in the SFC. The stakeholders give a more critical assessment, for instance, on the stakeholder involvement at national level, or on the communication between policy areas or sectors at national level. Some Member States report that the EU FAP had also an impact on *directing financing at national level*, a greater emphasis on forest-environmental issues in the Rural Development Programmes, NFP linked with rural development and strengthening importance of forestry in rural development, and also EU LIFE+ funding for forest-related projects. The LIFE+ programme €16m support for the FUTMON project was positively appreciated by the 23 Member States involved: the project provided 2.5 years' funding to redesign and develop the existing forest monitoring system based on around 300 intensive monitoring plots and 5500 large scale plots.

The issue of cross-sectoral cooperation within NFP – *horizontal cooperation and communication* across policy areas at Member State level – was mainly raised in the Commission and stakeholder responses to the EU FAP ex-post evaluation surveys. The Member States tend to underline in their responses that EU FAP was expected to influence on improving coherence and cross-sectoral cooperation especially at EU level (within Commission mainly). The stakeholders express that they expected to see changes at Member State level, and a more coherent approach across EU27. Because stakeholders do not see this impact between forest-related policy and Rural Development and biomass and energy plans, they conclude that the EU FAP influence on establishing “national action plans” is weak.

The stakeholders' feedback is to an extent contradictory to what the Member States reported in the ex-post evaluation surveys: there has been influence on national policies, but not in the

same manner or to a same extent in all EU27 Member States. Furthermore, some Member States reported that there is raised awareness about coordination at the national level too; there is a need to coordinate national preparation to EU processes and ensure better information flow between different sectors, as well as to ensure information sharing between regional representatives participating in the EU level working groups.

Did the EU FAP activities have an impact on cooperation in improving coherence, complementarities, and coordination of activities?

The EU FAP has been helpful for information exchange within the Commission, between Member States and between Commission and the Member States. Due to its character as a voluntary instrument, improving cooperation and coordination is based on the parties' willingness to engage in the implementation of the Action Plan and to follow up on the produced results. For example, the need to improve forest monitoring and information at a coherent EU scale has been recognised for a long time, and both the EU Forestry Strategy and the EU Forest Action Plan address this as a core issue. The EU FAP has been able to have only limited impact on this objective, and although the Green Paper on forest protection and information provides an important and coherent starting point for further work, the rate of progress will depend on a greater degree of cooperation and commitment by Member States.

When looking into Member State and stakeholder representatives' perceptions of the extent to which the EU FAP has succeeded in its objectives (Figure 15 and Figure 16), the Member States give in general a more positive assessment about the achievements. A notable difference is in the perceptions about success in improving coordination; the stakeholder responses give much more critical assessment, especially about the achievements in improving coordination and coherence between different policy areas in forest sector between EU and Member States. Although in the survey responses it was often noted that development in forest monitoring and protection requires more work to achieve the goals set, the Member State and stakeholder responses show positive assessment on the process during EU FAP implementation and keeping this topic on the agenda.

Improving coherence and cross-sectoral co-operation was defined as a major goal for the EU FAP in implementing the EU Forestry Strategy. The assessment of EU FAP impact on cooperation mechanisms and practices looks into the structures of EU FAP implementation. The cooperation and coordination within Commission takes place primarily in the form of information sharing, for instance, through the SFC being a platform for sharing Member States' practices and experiences; regular information from the Commission to SFC (and AGFC); coordination within Commission in ISG on forestry; participation of policy area specific and technical expertise in the definition of the SFC ad hoc Working Group terms of reference as well as in the work of the working groups. All these structures strengthen cooperation and communication in implementing the principles defined in the EU Forestry Strategy. However, as already noted in EQ1, leverage to implementation and influence at the Community or Member State level is limited.

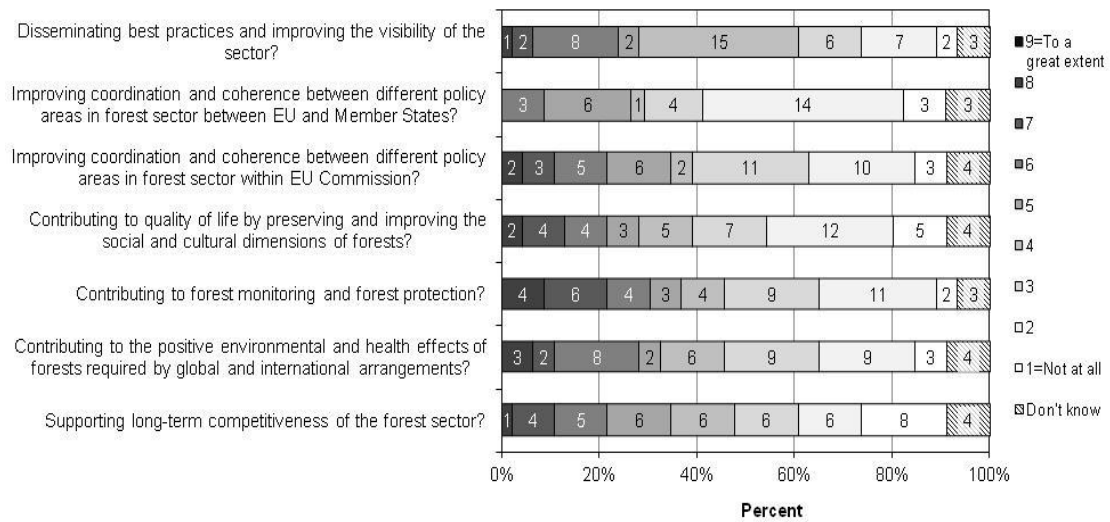


Figure 15 Stakeholder respondents’ perceptions of the extent to which the EU Forest Action Plan has succeeded in its objectives (N=46).

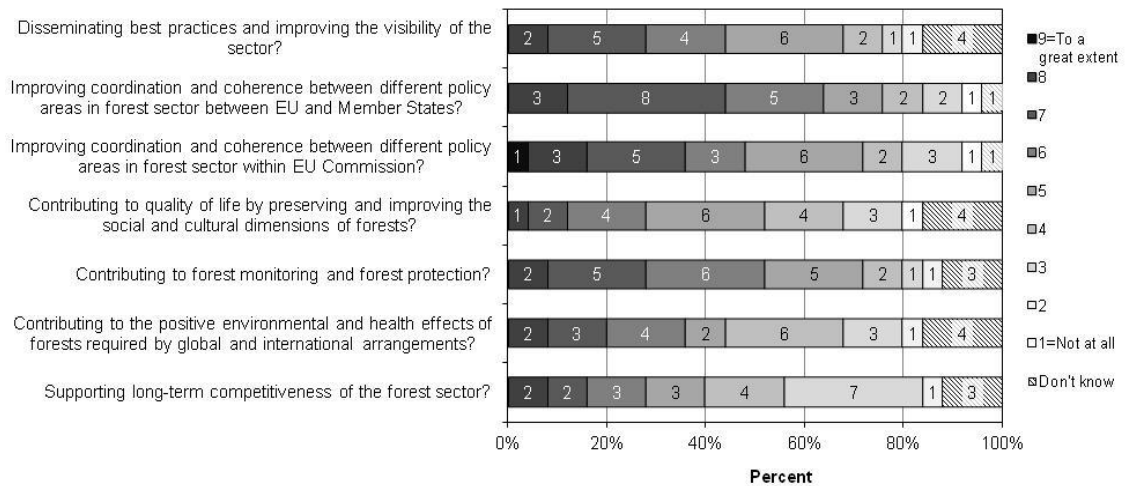


Figure 16 Member State respondents’ perceptions of the extent to which the EU Forest Action Plan has succeeded in its objectives (N=25).

The SFC ad hoc Working Group reports and the SFC opinions are available for use at the **Commission**. The EU FAP implementation has provided structure for direct information sharing and experts participating in the Working Groups – however, in the end it depends also on the timing of the EU FAP result and how well it finds its way to the policy and regulation preparation ongoing in the Commission. The ex-post evaluation surveys indicate that the reports (as well as studies produced) have been utilised in the Commission: the report from SFC on forestry measures on rural development has been utilised for CAP health check modification and particularly in the Commission proposals on the CAP reform; the EU FAP provided a point of reference and justification for forest-related topics to be included in the annual Work Programmes and the calls for proposals in FP7; the guidance on wood mobilisation and SFC report on forests and climate change are used for the elaboration of the EU renewable energy policy documents and guidance. For the last example mentioned, the timing of EU FAP input seems not have been an optimal one – the Renewable Energy directive (Directive 2009/28/EC) preparation was long ahead at the point when EU FAP results were available.

There is no obligation of **Member States** to report their national forest policy developments (or implementation of NFPs) to the EU level. The EU FAP evaluations have been the first initiative in this respect, but the detail of responses varied between countries. The ex-post evaluation survey results do not allow comparison between the Member States, or elaboration of implementation results for the whole EU27 – instead, the evaluation responses illustrate the approaches taken in Member States towards the EU FAP and its expected impact to NFP. The SFC as a platform for sharing Member State experiences and practices has been valued by a number of Member States with respect to forestry measures in Rural Development, to forest areas in Natura2000, and to urban and peri-urban forests. For example, in the context of forest protection (Key Action 9) several Member States made reference to improved opportunities to share information and experiences, including several transnational groupings supported by a range of EU and national funding. In the ex-post evaluation surveys a majority of stakeholders share the view that the redefined role of the SFC significantly improved communication and sharing of practices across Member States.

In the ex-post evaluation surveys several Member States iterated that new EU policy developments with a direct impact on forests and forestry were often discussed at the **SFC** (and **AGFC**) meetings at a stage when they were already well developed. This refers to, for example, issues such as biofuels/biomass and sustainability criteria, or high nature value forestry. Policy developments affecting forestry and forests have been often perceived as occurring more rapidly than efforts at coordination at the EU level. The opinion was again expressed that the EU FAP primarily remains a tool used by the forestry sector. A large number of Member States and Commission representatives were of the opinion that the EU FAP helped to improve coordination between the EU and the Member States, particularly by strengthening the role of the SFC, but also by realising opinions on important topics such as climate change and forests and creating working groups to collect technical expertise on specific topics. At Member State level, some reservations on the contribution of the EU FAP to the successful coordination of activities between forestry and nature conservation authorities were raised. Stakeholders generally rated the level of coordination achieved by the EU FAP significantly lower than Member States, whether across policy areas in the Commission or between the EU and Member States, but thought it was more useful with regard to disseminating best practices and improving the visibility of the sector. Furthermore, a range of stakeholders emphasised that it was often unclear how their views are taken into account by the SFC or the ISG on Forestry. The Commission services opinions, in turn, diverged on what level of coordination was achieved by EU FAP related processes: those more strongly involved agreeing that it improved information flows and those less immersed questioned whether it had any impact at all.

Thus instead of *being a driver* of policy coordination, the EU FAP has, at its best, reacted to developments in other policy areas. In the ex-post evaluation surveys many respondents (Commission services, Member States and stakeholders) acknowledge the positive aspect of exchanging information within the framework of the EU FAP. At the same time the respondents also recognise that the mere information sharing does not necessarily lead to improved policy coherence or impact on policy definitions. For stronger impact, stronger policy instruments would be needed, although there is lack of enthusiasm and political will for defining a stronger policy instrument, such as a legally binding agreement on forests.

With respect to **international** processes the general feedback from the ex-post evaluation surveys is that coordination and communication should be improved at multiple levels (within Commission, between Member States and within Member States). Some Member States, however, indicate that EU FAP implementation did have a positive influence to international processes (e.g. Forest Europe, UNFF-9 and post-Kyoto/LULUCF). As already described in the Evaluation Question 1 analysis (EQ1.2 and EQ1.4), the SFC has been informed about the international forest-related processes. The developments in these agendas have proceeded in parallel to EU FAP implementation, and the EU FAP impact on the international developments is limited. At the same time, the EU FAP implementation has faced the challenge that the EU forestry issues were kept separate from international forestry issues (see the example of the

EU Timber Regulation preparation in 2008-2010 in Key Actions 16 and 17 in Chapter 2.3 and the analyses in EQ1.4).

The issue of **forest monitoring and information** is important across all objectives of the EU FAP. This was emphasised in the ex-post evaluation surveys and illustrates the complexity of issues related to improving coherence, complementarities, and coordination across Europe. Criticisms by stakeholders of a lack of coordination was also voiced by some Member States; there is no coherent set of indicators or data shared by existing processes such as LIFE+ forest monitoring project, COST Actions, FP7 projects, Eurostat, MCPFE/Forest Europe State of Europe's forests 2007 and 2011 reports, and UNECE/FAO Forest Resources Assessment 2010. On the positive side, the Commission services supported relevant studies on forest monitoring (Key Action 8) and on protection of forests and phytosanitary issues (Key Action 9). The coordination and streamlining of existing forest data centres under the JRC EFDAC has been seen as an improvement in the availability of data, but stakeholders observe that there is a lack of interplay between the sharing of information at EU and Member State level, and a lack of integration of information on economic, social and environmental services of forest. The failure of forest information services to keep pace with changing policy priorities has had a negative impact on availability of coherent EU data for reporting to UNFCCC, CBD, and for informing appropriately the environmental, climate as well as energy and bio-based economy policies. In the ex-post evaluation surveys it is for example suggested that the next stage of development of the EFMS should be co-ordinated with the plant health policies and promote development of information at Member State level on the appropriate balance of eradication and containment measures in the protected areas in cases when forest pest (e.g. pinewood nematode and *Anoplophora*) outbreaks occur so as to minimise damage to timber and biodiversity resource and optimise the balance between the economic and environmental resources. This information would benefit from coordination with the development of frameworks for surveillance plans for harmful organisms under the Common Plant Health Regime (CPHR).

Conclusions

Impact on EU policies has been indirect: information sharing and providing an agenda for raising awareness and understanding about the forest-related issues across policy areas. Expectations for influence from the EU FAP to EU level policies were high and this can be seen in a number of very critical assessments given in the ex-post evaluation surveys by Member State and stakeholder representatives about the impact of the Action Plan: although in the beginning of the EU FAP implementation there were expectations of a more proactive and holistic approach to forestry-related issues in the EU, the EU FAP has at its best been able to react to developments ongoing in other policy areas, such as energy and renewable energy targets. However, there can be seen an influence on for example the FP7 implementation for forest and forest sector research, as well as EU FAP providing a channel to address forestry measures in preparation of the new rural development regulation. In order to ensure leverage to other policy areas, suitable timing and influence channels are crucial to deliver SFC opinions or Working Group reports to the processes ongoing.

The EU FAP has to an extent influenced national level NFPs – but the approach varies from one country to another based on the goals defined in a particular Member State. There are countries that more or less aim to comply with the EU FAP, and in the other extreme, countries which do not expect to see connections from EU FAP to NFP, but emphasise that the activities and priorities have been included in the national agendas well before defining the EU Action Plan. This comparison of countries in their approaches to EU FAP does not yet reveal anything about the actual implementation of the NFPs: even though the EU FAP gave a structure to share Member States' practices on several topics at EU level, there is no investigation on how effectively the NFPs have been implemented in EU Member States. Influence on horizontal cooperation within Member States – between policy areas – is assessed critically especially by stakeholders in the course of the ex-post evaluation. However, the ex-post evaluation investigations show at least an indirect influence in this respect too: the EU FAP has provided

an additional driver to highlighting forestry measures in rural development programmes, addressing forest-based resources in the national bioenergy strategies or including wood and wood products in public procurement guidelines. Also the need for improving information channels at the Member State level when preparing for EU level processes has been recognised in some Member States.

The EU FAP has been helpful for information exchange within the Commission, between Member States and between Commission and the Member States. Due to its character as a voluntary instrument, improving cooperation and coordination is based on the parties' willingness to engage to the implementation of the Action Plan and to feel ownership of the activities as well as the results produced. For example, the need for improved forest information has been recognised for a long time, and both the EU Forestry Strategy and the EU Forest Action Plan address this as a core issue. The Green Paper is a welcome step forward but moving on towards a coherent and consistent forest monitoring information for EU27 will not be easy, and requires considerably more political commitment from the Member States on providing resources.

Key lessons learned and open questions as food for thought for elaborating possible follow-up of the Action Plan:

- The EU FAP is a voluntary instrument based on shared responsibility. For achieving an impact with the Action Plan activities on EU, national or international processes the following aspects have been important:
 - Timing: *is there a way to be more proactive and foresee the key issues arising from international processes or other policy areas with an impact on EU forestry so that a timely forestry sector response or at least mechanisms to address the issues could be ensured?*
 - Reach beyond the mere implementation partners: *is there a way to further strengthen the connections within the Commission and in the Member States to reach relevant units, other sector representatives and platforms involved in the EU processes and international processes relevant to forests?*
 - Commitment and interest: *is there a way to strengthen ownership of the Action Plan and its results? For example, are there ways of making the work done in Member States but also in regional set-ups visible and acknowledged as a contribution to the EU (and pan-European) goals? Does an EU action require interest of all Member States or are there issues for which more regional or other scope is useful and still producing an EU added value?*
- The EU FAP is concentrating on EU forestry and the supply side mainly. The impact of the forestry sector, to contributing to Europe 2020 targets, remains unknown for the general public. Increasing awareness on forest sector impact on society at large would require a more holistic approach: *is there a way to assess the societal demands, the products and services at present, but also the future needs on forests (thus wood and other renewable raw material from forests, and other ecosystem services provided by forests) as well as taking into account the contradicting processes that underlie these demands (e.g. renewable energy vs. biodiversity)?*
- The EU Action Plan can be seen as having had an impact on national level goals (same objectives repeated in EU FAP and in NFP) and on approaches (similar structures at EU and national levels to reach better involvement across different levels and sectors), but there is need to share practices and experiences on NFP implementation as well as the results. How to strengthen the two-way process between the Community level (EU FAP) and the Member State level (NFP): in other words, *is there a way to improve the use of Member State (and stakeholder) forestry expertise in preparing the EU level initiatives and to encourage the Member States to report the national (or when more suitable, regional) implementation of the EU goals in a more structured manner?*

4.1.3 EQ3: To what extent have the activities in the framework of the EU Forest Action Plan contributed to balancing economic, environmental and socio-cultural objectives related to forestry?

The EU Forestry Strategy emphasises Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) as defined by Forest Europe and the multifunctional role of forests as overall principles for action. The EU Forest Action Plan should accordingly, in a balanced way, address the economic, ecological and social dimensions of SFM.

SFM is largely determined by a suitable balance of societal goals, in particular from economic, environmental and socio-cultural perspectives. The most widespread approach to sustainability represents a division of sustainability into three domains, namely, the *economic* (e.g. standard of living), the *environmental* (e.g. biophysical carrying capacity) and the *socio-cultural* (e.g. systems of governance). This generates an operational view of sustainability that stimulates, for instance, environmental stewardship, social responsibility and economic viability related to forestry. Effectively, environmental, economic and socio-cultural criteria have to be considered with equal importance. The ambition to promote SFM is reflected in the first three objectives of the EU FAP – the objectives of long-term competitiveness, protecting the environment, and contribution to the quality of life. The analysis in the Evaluation Question 3 – the extent to which the activities in the framework of the EU Forest Action Plan have contributed to balancing economic, environmental and socio-cultural objectives related to forestry – are based on Evaluation Question 1 (EQ1.1-1.3) analysis. However, Evaluation Question 3 takes a wider perspective to economic, environmental and socio-cultural objectives, potential synergies and conflicts and the reasons for the outcomes observed.

Balanced contribution of the Action Plan refers to activities formulated for EU FAP objectives (1 to 4), and activities carried out by the EU FAP, including expected impacts, how they were addressed and their contribution to the economic, environmental and socio-cultural objectives.

Economic, environmental, socio-cultural objectives refer to the division of sustainability into three domains: economic (e.g. standard of living), ecological (e.g. biophysical carrying capacity) and socio-cultural (e.g. systems of governance). This generates an operational view of sustainability that stimulates environmental stewardship, social responsibility and economic viability related to forestry. Environmental, economic and socio-cultural criteria have to be considered with equal importance.

There is not one single definition of what constitutes a “*balanced approach*” for SFM, it may in fact have multiple meanings and facets. This Evaluation Question – under Evaluation Theme 1 – therefore aims to cover those aspects as much as possible and will include several directions that are possible elements in balancing the three objectives of the EU FAP. These different aspects were also partly addressed in the ex-post evaluation survey answers. For the purpose of the ex-post evaluation, the relevant aspects can be defined and will be addressed in the below analysis as follows:

- 1) *Did the EU FAP activities contribute equally to economic, environmental and socio-cultural objectives?* Balance is understood in a way that the EU FAP activities contribute equally to the economic, environmental and socio-cultural objectives. This refers to the activities as formulated for Objectives 1 to 3, activities carried out in the EU FAP, and effects and impacts produced. The evaluation of this aspect includes how much attention was paid to which dimensions of SFM in the EU FAP. This includes, for instance, how the activities were formulated and implemented, how much resources were dedicated, what the objectives/targets were, what kind of results were obtained, how much activity and response was triggered or what kind of impacts are expected.
- 2) *Did the EU FAP activities balance out existing imbalances between economic, environmental and socio-cultural objectives?* Balance is also understood as correcting existing imbalances. In this view, the EU FAP should not only be balanced in itself but it

would put a particular emphasis on such issues that are not yet receiving sufficient attention. It would invest less in already active fields to support topics that are undervalued so far by existing and conventional policies and measures

- 3) *Did the EU FAP activities contribute to an integrated view of SFM, including economic, environmental and socio-cultural objectives?* Finally, balance also includes the aspect to actively work towards an integrated consideration of the three pillars of sustainable development. It is often observed that only single aspects are independently considered in policy measures. The concepts of sustainable development and SFM, however, aim at an integrated view. This aspect thus particularly looks as if the EU FAP contributed to strengthening the integrated and multidisciplinary approach to SFM. In this regard the EU FAP Objective 4 is important, as it has the aim to improve the coordination across different levels (vertical) and across different sectors (horizontal), as well as to enhance communication.

Did the EU FAP activities contribute equally to economic, environmental and socio-cultural objectives?

The EU FAP addressed the economic, environmental and socio-cultural objectives of Sustainable Forest Management, thus contributing to keeping all three sustainable development dimensions on the agenda for forestry-related initiatives at the Community level as well as in the Member States (e.g. structure and definitions of the NFP). In implementation of the Action Plan there was less attention to socio-cultural aspects at the EU level, although activities tackled this dimension at Member State, regional and cross-border levels.

In the ex-post evaluation surveys, the Member State representatives assessed that the three dimensions of sustainable development emphasised in the implementation of the EU FAP in 2007-2011 were rather equally balanced, though on average a slightly higher emphasis was put on the environmental objective (Figure 17). Stakeholders iterated more often the lack of balance, either referring to activities more relevant in addressing economic objectives or to those promoting environmental issues. Across the different groups, however, there was agreement that the socio-cultural dimension of the EU FAP received less attention than the environmental and economic aspects. As already described in the Evaluation Question 1 analysis, there were also fewer Key Actions in the socio-cultural Objective 3, and fewer activities reported at the EU level, although at Member State level there were a number of activities on environmental education (Key Action 10), protective functions of forests (Key Action 11) and urban and peri-urban forests (Key Action 12).

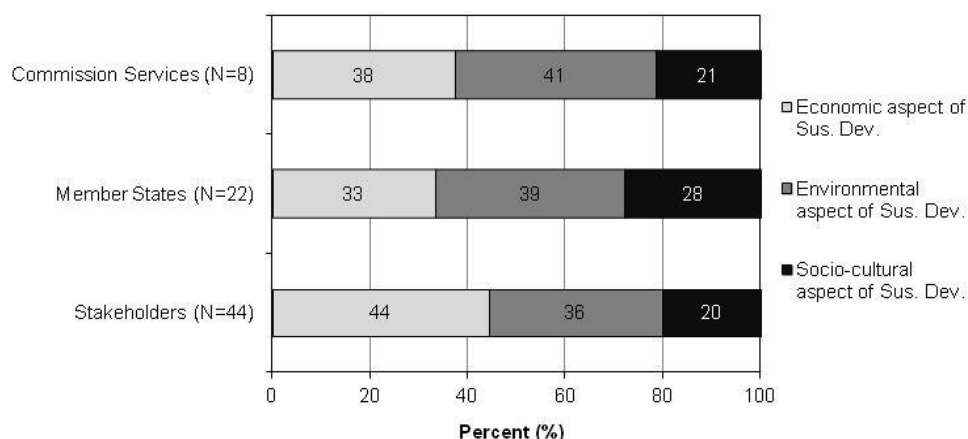


Figure 17 How were the three dimensions of sustainable development emphasised in the implementation of the EU FAP.

Please note that the figure presents averages calculated from the survey responses, thus the variety of views expressed especially in the stakeholder responses is not visible in this figure.

When looking at the perceived impact the activities had on the three dimensions, the different perceptions at EU and Member State levels becomes even more pronounced (see Figure 18): The Commission representatives see the strongest impact in the economic dimension, while the Member State representatives see most impact in the ecological sphere. The Member State representatives, furthermore, see more impact in the field of social goals, compared to the Commission representatives. This can be explained by the fact that the actions under Objective 3 were largely carried out at Member State level and the Member States are naturally more aware of these activities and impacts. There remains, however, a lack of coordination activities; exchange of practices between Member States could benefit the Action Plan implementation in the socio-cultural goals, too.

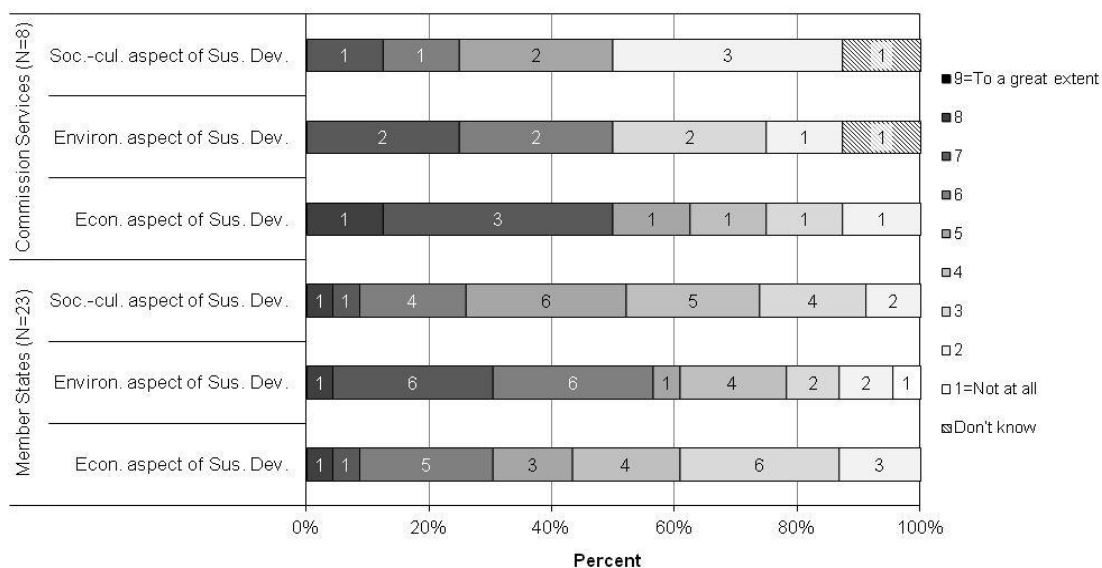


Figure 18 To what extent has the EU FAP Implementation had an impact on the three dimensions of sustainable development?

When asked about synergies or conflicts between the tree dimensions, a majority of the Member State respondents thought that the activities under the EU FAP mainly resulted in the achievement of synergies, rather than raising conflicts, though a part also believed that both synergies and conflicts developed (see Figure 19). As regards synergies most often opportunities arising from commitments to climate change mitigation and biomass for bioenergy production were mentioned. However, this was also the area where most of the conflicts were thought to occur, particularly regarding potential trade-offs between bioenergy and biodiversity conservation, but also forest management measures for climate change mitigation (e.g. carbon storage) compared to measures for climate change adaptation (e.g. protection function) and biodiversity, and intensifying timber production compared with ensuring the protective function of forests.

The Member State respondents generally thought that activities carried out under one objective did not undermine other EU FAP objectives, and this can be interpreted as having achieved a consistent translation of the different objectives into the EU FAP. However, policy developments in other sectors have put pressure on specific forest functions at the EU level as well as at a national level, which the EU FAP was not able to address (e.g. renewable energy policy).

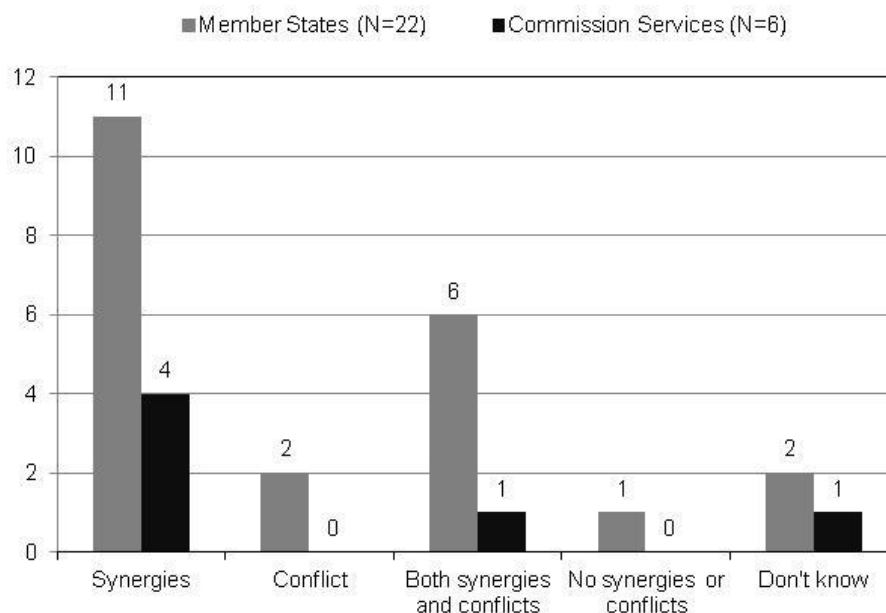


Figure 19 Did the implementation of the EU FAP in 2007-2011 lead to achieving synergies – or did it lead to increasing conflicts – between the three dimensions of sustainability?

When judging the emphasis of the three dimensions of sustainable development in the EU FAP implementation on the basis of the inventory of activities, there is a different weighting of Objectives 1 to 3 showing a different attention to the three dimensions. The economic Objective 1 was strongly emphasised because many of the activities were formulated quite precisely in the multiannual work programme and suggested specific measures (e.g. studies) to be carried out. In the implementation, a focus was put on Objective 1 by starting these activities in 2007-2008: Most of the activities were started and completed already in the first half of the EU FAP implementation period. As a consequence, this resulted in early and concrete outputs drawing also more attention on these themes. Also the environmental Objective 2 resulted in a considerable number of studies by the Commission and the European Environmental Agency.

Compared with these two, the socio-economic Objective 3 resulted in less tangible outcomes: For instance, EU level studies and SFC ad hoc working groups were not used to the same extent as for Objectives 1 and 2. Mostly, activities at the EU level were SFC discussions and workshops, and more concrete measures were taken at Member State level, thus with less reporting to the EU FAP implementation, and seemingly less coordination or exchange across the Member States. However, there are several activities carried out also in territorial cooperation with the European Regional Development Funds (ERDF), thus as regional projects or cross-border activities. Although these do not find their way into the reports of EU FAP state-of-the-play in SFC, these international activities with often high visibility at local levels do have an important bearing for the goals of the EU FAP. It remains, particularly at Member State level, that interest and activities are distributed across all three dimensions. However, specific EU FAP activities to coordinate these at EU level have addressed much more the economic and ecological than the social dimension.

Did EU FAP activities balance out existing imbalances between economic, environmental and socio-cultural objectives?

In the implementation of the EU FAP, the three sustainable development dimensions stayed largely apart, with measures for each dimension implemented separately. The EU FAP activities re-enforced existing interest patterns in a way that it put more attention on economic and ecological goals than on socio-cultural ones, which are less represented at the EU level. In addition, the systemic and supporting activities such as education and communication were rather disregarded although they would be important for example for building capacity among forest owners and for raising awareness of the public. One balancing element can be seen in research with the FP7 funding, which contributed to studies and activities in all EU FAP objectives.

In the implementation of the EU FAP, the concept of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) is taken from the EU Forestry Strategy, thus as defined by the Ministerial Conference on Protection of Forests in Europe (now Forest Europe). However, through the implementation of the EU FAP, it becomes clear that there is no common understanding about what is meant as “balancing” or ensuring a balance between the different objectives. There are different expectations depending to whom this question is addressed – to a representative of an individual Member State or a group of countries (e.g. Mediterranean region, mountainous region) or to forest owners, specific F-BI, or environmental groups. In policy practice, the three dimensions of SFM are apparently driven by different group interests behind.

The ex-post evaluation responses by Member State, stakeholder and Commission representatives indicate that the EU FAP did address all three dimensions of sustainable development, but the three ends of one goal (e.g. a sustainable development) remained apart. There are clear views that emphasise one dimension over another, and the Action Plan implementation provided a framework to express these views – but there was less open *dialogue* between the different interest groups to define common goals and a common vision for EU forests or EU forestry. This lack of dialogue also made it possible for different definitions of SFM to be defined at the Member State level, due to the dominance of certain interest groups. Even more, developments in other policy sectors (e.g. energy) overruled the forestry sector debate.

Balance between the sustainable development dimensions is not a static position, but the EU FAP can rather be seen as a framework to address the three dimensions, and to define a common vision for the EU forests. If this has been on the agenda, the EU FAP documents do not express this view, neither has the EU FAP framework been utilised to open a dialogue on the multifunctional role of forests or SFM. Rather, the document reviews (as well as the evaluation surveys) show that the economic and environmental expectations are considered separately.

In the implementation of the Key Actions it can be seen that the EU FAP activities re-enforce existing interest patterns rather than counteract dominating topics, balance different interests, or re-orient policy measures. It is a typical observation that those activities for which a higher interest is perceived were more actively implemented. Fewer activities were carried out for Key Actions for which no direct interest from other policy fields and actors was perceived. Through this mechanism, more resources seem to be invested in the economic and ecological dimensions under the EU FAP Objectives 1 and 2, while fewer activities were carried out and less input was invested in the EU FAP for Objective 3 at the EU level.

In concrete examples, the use of forest-biomass for energy generation (Key Action 4) gained much attention during the EU FAP implementation due to the EU renewable energy targets and the work ongoing both at EU and Member State levels. While, for instance, forest owner cooperation and SFM training (Key Action 5), which was mainly implemented in forestry sectors at Member State level, was less visible also in the Action Plan. One result of this

situation is that instrumental activities gain more attention than systemic or supporting ones, such as forest owner cooperation (Key Action 5) or forest communication (Key Action 18) which would be important as a systemic support (or capacity-building) for the sector but was neglected in the implementation.

For Objective 3, a high interest and many activities can be observed at Member State level and even regional level, but the coordination at EU level – as task of the EU FAP – was very limited. One reason may be that the different Key Action topics are often not of general interest, as for instance the protective functions or urban forests are not of the same importance in all Member States. Surprisingly, Key Action 10 on environmental education seems to gain very high interest in many Member States but still less attention for common EU level activities; although also here international, and cross-border projects were financed with EU funds, these activities are not reported to the EU FAP implementation. The EU FAP could have played a much stronger role in bringing socio-cultural aspects of forestry to a higher attention to policy makers at EU and Member State levels as well as to the general public. Apparently, there are no similar interest groups for socio-cultural aspects as there are for public and private sector representatives from economic (forest owners and industry) and ecological (environmental organisations and nature conservation) fields which are well represented in the Advisory Group on Forestry and Cork (AGFC).

When looking at the implementation of the Action Plan, one combining element, however, across all three objectives can be found: research projects carried out in FP7 have addressed all EU FAP objectives for the economic, environmental and socio-cultural aspects. Results of the FP7 projects were also presented to SFC (and AGFC), to share the scientific results for practitioners and forest administrations.

Did EU FAP activities contribute to an integrated view of SFM, including economic, environmental and socio-cultural objectives?

Little attention was given in the Action Plan implementation to strengthening a more integrated approach to the three sustainable development dimensions, assessing all three dimensions together. The EU Action Plan was not actively utilised as a framework to define EU level vision and priorities overarching the national and regional definitions of multifunctionality and Sustainable Forest Management.

For some part, the EU FAP tears apart the three sustainable development dimensions by formulating the Key Actions under the three headings of Objectives 1 to 3. Single aspect actions are, for instance, Key Action 1 on globalisation and competitiveness, Key Action 7 on biodiversity conservation, or Key Action 11 on the protective functions of forests. Some actions may be seen as overarching actions, bridging all three dimensions of sustainability: Key Action 2 on supporting research should be and is directed towards all aspects of forestry, Key Action 5 on forest owners' cooperation and education should aim for a broad approach, or Key Action 10 on environmental education should address different aspects connected with forest management. For some actions, the separation seems odd: activities and discussions on protective functions and natural hazards (Key Action 11) under the socio-cultural Objective 3 were separated in the Action Plan from those on forest fires (Key Action 9) under the environmental Objective 2.

Some Key Actions have certainly been dealt with to a great extent from a single perspective although they would have had high potential for an integrated view. Under the economic Objective 1, the activities on non-wood forest goods and services (Key Action 3) can be seen as an issue where the question of a limited marketability is confronted with high social values, be it fresh water, recreation or many other benefits. The study and discussions, however, took largely the Objective 1 economic perspective, thus leaving out the other governance options besides market-led developments. Although the market perspective is an important new and innovative contribution, the bigger picture is left out by refraining to one perspective only. The

energy use of forest biomass (Key Action 4) calls for a multi-dimensional discussion because of strong latent conflicts between on the one hand the intensified production of environmentally friendly wood as renewable material and energy source, and other forest uses on the other hand, including water protection, recreation, and biodiversity conservation.

This also refers to the environmental Objective 2 (Key Action 6 on climate change and Key Action 7 on biodiversity), in the context where there is much potential in developing synergies with economic and socio-cultural objectives, but which many seem not to be aware of and thus potential opportunities are lost (e.g. ecosystem-based adaptation to climate change, ecosystem service provision by forests). With regard to forest information and the work towards a European Forest Monitoring System (Key Action 8), key issues concern the gaps and inconsistencies in capturing information in a policy relevant way, and the acute perception that the increased challenge in balancing the economic, environmental and socio-cultural functions of forests is a fairly novel phenomenon that did not exist across the stakeholder spectrum when the EU FAP was adopted. In the context of activities enhancing the protection of forests from fire and other threats (Key Action 9), and finding ways to meet the need to improve resilience of forests to the multiple effects of a changing climate are both fundamental to the continued existence of the forest resource in the EU. These activities could be regarded as “balancing” the three objectives. Forest information can also be seen as one overarching element in the EU FAP: through the implementation of the Action Plan, Member State and stakeholder representatives have several times raised the question of what kind of forest-related information is needed. On one hand the international and EU environmental commitments as well as the goals for the climate action require certain information, but there is also need for better economic information at EU level to assess profitability of forestry or overall societal impacts of the sector.

Forest communication on Sustainable Forest Management, forest owner cooperation (Key Action 5) and environmental education and information (Key Action 10) could potentially gain a lot of significance, if seen from an integrated point of view and giving a comprehensive picture of forests as a natural resource managed for multiple societal needs. The forest communication strategy (Key Action 18) is a means to emphasise the three dimensions and their interconnections and interdependency for forests and forestry in Europe, as well as to enhance awareness and knowledge about the three pillars of Sustainable Forest Management.

A key aspect that was often mentioned in the ex-post evaluation surveys especially by stakeholders relates to the fact that although addressing all three dimensions of sustainability, the EU FAP failed to translate the objectives into a common understanding of sustainable forest management across Member States. Different expectations from Member States also resulted in different definitions for SFM, for example, due to vocal interest groups at the national level dominating the debate. The EU FAP has been a framework to address the question of multifunctional use of forests and sustainable use of forests, but there has not been a genuine dialogue about the concepts of multifunctionality or sustainable use – the perspectives of protection and production seem to remain at extreme ends of the scale, without mitigation between the viewpoints.

At the same time there are increasing needs and demands on natural resources, including forests as a source of renewable resources for example contributing to the bioeconomy targets (see Evaluation Question 2). There is need to find a way to assess the three dimensions together, and potential negative impacts of emphasizing one aspect at the cost of other aspects, including potential trade-offs between environmental, socio-cultural and economic objectives. Several responses in the ex-post evaluation surveys indicate that other policies seem to dictate the role of forest sector. If there is a lack of political will, it will be difficult to define a European level vision or priorities, and without these, the impact of activities will likely be limited with regard to any European level goal.

The ex-post evaluation surveys also indicate the difficulty of opening such dialogue for a long-term vision and goals for forests and forestry at the EU level. Rather than for a platform for expressing different views, there is perhaps need for more cooperation in order to reach a more integrated view – for example, the urgency due to forest fires and related damage raised concern that there were grounds also for EU level cooperation and action. And rather than addressing the problems which the key stakeholders cannot find a common ground for today, there is perhaps need to widen the view to a longer future and to the society at large, thus also beyond the EU FAP implementation and stakeholders already involved. Multifunctionality and Sustainable Forest Management definitions are negotiated in several frameworks, starting from the national (and sub-national) forest programmes and building up a consistent route to the European level vision and goals, and the EU Action Plan could be the overarching element across Europe and the varying conditions and set-ups across it.

Conclusions

The EU FAP addressed the three dimensions of sustainable development in its implementation. Thereby, Objective 1 particularly focused on the economic dimension, Objective 2 on the environmental-ecological dimension, and Objective 3 on the socio-cultural dimension. Objective 4 on cooperation and coordination has a specific relevance to achieving a balanced view on Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) in the understanding of an integrated approach to sustainability. The need for a “balancing” approach is addressed in the forest-related policy documents several times. Overall, however, the goal of the Forestry Strategy and the EU FAP to contribute to a balanced consideration of the three elements in SFM remained implicit in the EU FAP and therefore did not gain specific attention in the implementation of the activities.

More specifically, the review of the implementation of the EU FAP activities shows an imbalanced attention to the three sustainability dimensions. Ex-post evaluation surveys and document reviews show that in comparison to the economic and ecological goals, the socio-cultural goals were less emphasised; the activities contributing to economic and ecological goals were more specifically formulated in the multiannual work programme, they were started in the beginning of the implementation period, concrete outputs were targeted and more resources were dedicated at the EU level in the form of studies and SFC ad hoc working groups. As a consequence, these issues gained more visibility at the EU level reporting of the Action Plan achievements. The ex-post evaluation surveys reveal that, overall, this imbalance was also perceived by the representatives of the Commission, Member States and stakeholders.

A specific contribution of the EU FAP activities to correct imbalances in the attention to the different sustainability elements can hardly be observed. One combining element, however, can be seen in the research on forests and forestry topics financed from FP7, which addressed all EU FAP objectives. Otherwise, the EU FAP activities re-enforce existing interest patterns rather than seek for re-orienting attention and thinking anew about the challenges ahead. The emphasis on economic and ecological themes can be seen as having been strengthened by the strong representation of public and private sector actors from forest owners and industry as well as environmental protection and nature conservation when compared to actors representing social, or socio-cultural interests in the implementation of the EU Action Plan. Also the systemic and supporting activities of the EU FAP were rather neglected at EU level, for instance, the actions on education and training of forest owners, as well as public awareness raising and information. Education would be an important contribution to building capacities of the whole sector to answer to new challenges, such as the growing competition for renewable raw materials and for different forest functions, and to new societal demands, such as recreation and needs of urban population.

Similarly, the contribution of the EU FAP to developing or supporting an integrated view on SFM was rather limited. Activities often focus on single aspects but less on integrated approaches. It was further observed that activities are typically led by single entities – though

in collaboration with others, but not with a shared responsibility. Only seldom were activities carried out jointly under the co-lead of different service units. A number of activities would have had strong potential for fostering integrated approaches to SFM, however, these were often less actively implemented or received less attention. What would help create common and integrated views would be a stronger cooperation of different viewpoints, let them be different administration sectors or different interest groups presented in the committees or advisory groups. This cooperation could be concrete projects to overcome actual challenges, thus people working together towards a common goal instead of coming together to talk about an issue from differing views. The societal and long-time perspective view is lacking in the EU FAP at the moment: it is an action plan addressing the three dimensions, but not negotiating priorities between them on how European forests can serve the society at large – moreover, societal contribution is expected to realise at local level mainly, and with little added value seen from concluding the impact of forests to the society at large at EU level.

Activities with a high potential to serve an integrated view on SFM are found under all objectives, such as actions related to research, education, information and communication. Their relevance for multiple goals and their integrating potential, however, was not realized.

Key lessons learned and open questions as food for thought for elaborating possible follow-up of the Action Plan:

- In the EU FAP design and implementation the concepts of multifunctionality, SFM and “balancing” were taken onboard without opening them up for further assessment or open dialogue. The definitions vary from one set-up to another (in the national forest programmes across Europe, among others), because the definitions can be negotiated for each geographic, temporal or any other scale. In accordance with the good governance principles this negotiation takes place in a transparent and also participatory manner. *Is there a way to strengthen the practices and capacities for a dialogue at local/regional/national levels so that the dialogue would also contribute to the definition of EU level vision, goals and priorities?*
- The EU FAP implementation addressed the three dimensions of sustainable development, but a more integrated approach was often lacking in order to address the three dimensions at the same time, including possible trade-offs between the environmental, economic and social goals. Fostering an integrated view would need to make this goal more explicit in the Action Plan. *Would there be an alternative structure of an Action Plan, which gives better support to overarching issues and supporting activities such as research, education and communication? Is there a way to encourage steps beyond mere expression of differing interests and goals? Such processes are not easy, but are there ways to facilitate thinking beyond the existing borderlines?*
- For example studies were valued in the evaluation surveys as a good basis for opening discussion in the SFC. Separation of the Key Actions under the EU FAP Objectives 1-3, however led to situation that certain actors – Member States or Commission services – took the lead with the other actors only receiving the outcome. The implementation of a more integrated view would require closer cooperation or joint implementation by the key actors. *Are there possibilities to assign activities to different leading actors so that the actors would carry out the activity with a joint responsibility?*

4.2 Evaluation theme 2: Relevance and added value of the EU FAP

The Evaluation Theme 2 includes two Evaluation Questions (EQ): firstly the added value of the EU FAP in implementing the Forestry Strategy (EQ4), and secondly the relevance of the Action Plan objectives, key actions and activities, as well as adequacy of its organisational set-up (EQ5). Analyses in the Evaluation Theme 2 are based on the results from previous Evaluation Questions 1-3, feedback and perceptions collected by the ex-post evaluation surveys, and information concluded from document reviews.

There is a short introduction in the beginning of each EQ, explaining how the analysis is made, and which indicators are crucial for the judgments by the evaluation team. Analysis is structured into three to four sub-questions under each EQ, and for a quick-reader there are short summaries (text box) of the key findings of the evaluation. In the end of each EQ there are key lessons learnt put forward as food for thought for elaborating a possible follow-up of the Action Plan.

4.2.1 EQ4: To what extent had the EU Forest Action Plan an added value in implementing the EU Forestry Strategy?

The EU Forest Action Plan (EU FAP) was developed as the main instrument for the implementation of the EU Forestry Strategy and it covers a period of five years (2007-2011). Prior to the EU FAP there were in fact no agreements covering the forest sector, voluntary or otherwise. Although there is no common EU forest policy, forestry-related issues were and are still dealt with under different fields. Some measures have found a legal basis in other policy areas, such as rural development, regional, industrial and environment policy. For example, measures on forest protection can be found in the Common Agricultural Policy, the Water Framework Directive and policies on nature conservation (e.g. Natura 2000). While the EU level action can contribute positively to the implementation of the Sustainable Forest Management and the multifunctional role of forests, the EU FAP contribution to better coordination is to promote more coherent approaches across different policy areas and levels of decision making (EU, national, international) as well as to provide a platform for the Member States to share their practices and to find a common ground for more concerted action. Against this background, the potential impact that the EU FAP and the Forestry Strategy can have on policy making in EU27 may be limited.

Added value: The extent to which the implementation of the EU FAP adds benefits to what would have been the result without the EU FAP in implementing the EU Forestry Strategy. It is well defined by the (1) *degree of coherence and coordination*, (2) *efficiency and effectiveness*, and (3) *activities triggered and/or influenced* by the Action Plan.

Coordination can be understood as a (1) one-way hierarchical process of directing action, (2) two-way dialogue of sharing and gaining information about parallel actions, or (3) multiple level collaboration process of dialogue and feedback in preparing positions and future actions.

The Action Plan's added value is understood as the extent to which the EU FAP has added benefits in implementing the EU Forestry Strategy, for instance, what would have happened in the absence of the EU FAP. The response to this evaluation question is structured under three sub-questions:

1. *Did the EU FAP cover the objectives defined by the EU Forestry Strategy?*
2. *Did the EU FAP operationalise and achieve the Objectives defined in the EU Forestry Strategy?*
3. *Could the same results have been achieved without the EU Forest Action Plan?*

Did the EU FAP cover the objectives defined by the EU Forestry Strategy?

The EU FAP respected the principles defined in the EU Forestry Strategy, such as the Sustainable Forest Management (SFM), multifunctional role of forests and the principle of subsidiarity. The EU FAP Key Actions and the multiannual work programme for 2007-2011 covered the objectives defined in the EU Forestry Strategy, as well as to a large extent also the issues and emphases raised in the Forestry Strategy implementation report and the following debate in 2005-2006.

The EU Forestry Strategy was developed with the overall objective of ensuring that forests in Europe are managed in a sustainable manner, while recognising the multifunctional role of forests for society. The strategy principles and the substantial elements guided the EU FAP definitions and implementation. These are: SFM as defined by the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (Forest Europe); principle of subsidiarity; contribution of measures at Community level; international commitments through NFP; active participation in international processes; need to improve coordination, communication and cooperation; biodiversity and SFM; promotion of wood and non-wood from SFM; forestry and F-BI contribution to income, employment and other elements affecting the quality of life; better integration of forests and forest products in all sectoral common policies, and a holistic approach towards SFM; encouraging of a participatory and transparent approach (stakeholders, involvement of forest owners); specific approaches and actions for the different types of forests, and; strategy as dynamic process which implies further discussions and activities along the previous lines. Table 5 shows that the EU FAP covers the EU Forestry Strategy objectives, including the points raised in the debate at the stage of Commission communication on the implementation of the strategy in 2005.

The Council Conclusions on the EU Forest Action Plan 2007-2011 (14043/06, 17 October 2006) highlighted the need for a work programme and coherence and synergy with other Community initiatives and action plans (e.g. the Biomass Action Plan, the EU FLEGT Action Plan, the Biodiversity Action Plan to 2010 and beyond, the Community strategic guidelines for rural development, the Seventh Research Framework Programme and the Commission Communication on the competitiveness of F-BI), as well as invited the Commission and Member States to implement the plan. Also a number of actions were mentioned for the Commission and Member States to pay particular attention on while implementing the Action Plan (e.g. Key Actions 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 16 and 17). This also concerned continued efforts, within the framework of the FLEGT Action Plan and the St. Petersburg Ministerial Declaration (ENA-FLEGT), to combat trade in illegally logged timber and the problems associated with illegal logging. In addition to these, a number of actions were highlighted, which – although being at least partly addressed in other Key Actions – were not directly translated as Key Actions in the multiannual work programme: *“promoting wood as a renewable raw material, inter alia, by information exchange, by evaluating the main constraints in this field and by linking to relevant Community industry sector policies and actions to support a wide-spread, efficient and cost-effective use of wood and other forest products”* and *“intensifying coordination and cooperation on activities and instruments that aim to achieve sustainable forest management worldwide, as well as by better integrating forest policy concerns into the EU’s international development policies”*. The Communication on the innovative and sustainable F-BI (COM(2008)113) has contributed to the first one mentioned, while for the latter, for example the Rio+ Communication (COM(2011)363) identifies that the FLEGT and REDD+ approaches can help promote sustainable forest management and combat deforestation. Thus, also these emphases are addressed in the EU policies, although parallel to the EU FAP work programme in 2007-2011.

Table 5 Coverage of the EU FAP of the EU Forestry strategy goals

EU Forestry Strategy	EU FAP
Council Resolution of 15 December 1998:	COM(2006)302 [SEC(2006)748]
Art.1-2: Principles and substantial elements	
Art.3: Contribution of forests on the promotion of employment, wellbeing, and the environment	Structure of the EU FAP (Objectives 1-3)
Art.4: Community take part actively in the implementation of the MCPFE resolutions and participate proactively in international discussion and negotiations on forestry-related issues	KA16: Strengthen the EU profile in international forest-related processes
Art.5: Protection of the Community's forests against atmospheric pollution; continuous improvement of the effectiveness of the European monitoring system of forest health, taking into account all the potential impacts on forest ecosystems,	KA9: Enhance the protection of EU forests
Art.6: Community scheme for the protection of forests against fire (incl. Community forest fire information system)	
Art.7: Continued development of the European Forestry Information and Communication System (incl. cooperation with the relevant national and international institutions),	KA8: Work towards a European Forest Monitoring System
Art.8: Cooperation with Central and Eastern Europe and in the MCPFE framework promoting sustainable management, conservation and sustainable development of forests (incl. pre-accession measures for agriculture and forestry in CEE);	
Art.9: Research activities on forestry in Community RTD programmes	KA2: Enhance research and technological development to enhance the competitiveness of the forest sector
Art.10: effective coordination between different policy sectors which have an influence on forestry, and of coordination at Community level; (making use of SFC, AGFC, AC-FBI as ad hoc consultation for a providing expertise for all forestry-related activities in the framework of existing Community policies)	KA13: Strengthen the role of SFC KA14: Strengthen coordination between policy areas in forest-related matters
Art.11: Conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in forests (forestry measures in rural development and the forest protection measures, as well as by research, conservation of genetic resources, and support for the application of the Pan-European criteria and indicators for SFM; action frame of the Community Biodiversity Strategy),	KA7: Contribute towards achieving the revised Community biodiversity objectives for 2010 and beyond
Art.12: Conservation and protection of areas representative of all types of forest ecosystems and of specific ecological interest (Natura2000)	
Art.13: SFM ensuring the role of forests as carbon sinks and reservoirs within the European Union (climate change strategies, in accordance with the Kyoto Protocol; protection and enhancement of existing carbon stocks, the establishment of new carbon stocks and encouragement of the use of biomass and wood-based products),	KA6: Facilitate EU compliance with the obligations on climate change mitigation of the UNFCCC10 and its KP and encourage adaptation to the effects of climate change
Art.14: Forestry and forest-based commercial activities fall within the open sector of the economy	
Art.15: Improvement of public and consumer opinion about forestry and forest products, assuring them that forests are managed sustainably (incl. certification schemes as market-based instruments)	KA17: Encourage the use of wood and other forest products from sustainably managed forests KA18: Improve information exchange and communication
Art.16: Forestry measures and rural development regulation and basis to implement the guidelines of this Resolution,	
Art.17: Forthcoming Commission Communications: - competitiveness of the Forest-based Industries, - directive on the marketing of forest reproductive material; - forestry development cooperation,	[COM (1999)457, COM(2008) 113] [1999/105/EC of 22 December 1999] [COM(1999)554]
Art.18: Commission to report to the Council on FS implementation within five years	

Commission report on FS implementation (COM(2005)84):	
<p>Basic principles and elements identified in 1998 are still valid ...in order to maintain and maximise its contribution, the strategy and its implementation process need to be placed within newly emerging policy context...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SFM an multipurpose forestry in Europe: open and global market challenges to economic viability of forestry needs to be addressed - Coherence between EU policies, coordination between Commission and Member States, monitoring mechanisms - Good governance, participatory and collaborative approach, transparency, structured dialogue with stakeholders; strengthen the consultation structures in forestry at Community and Member State level - Global importance of forests for sustainable development and climate change; EU continuation to support the international commitments for SFM at global level <p>A more coherent and pro-active approach to governing the Union's forest resources is needed in the future; a shared vision of the EU's forest sector and its challenges, shared understanding of what forests and forestry can contribute to modern society</p> <p>An Action Plan for SFM: which should provide a coherent framework for the implementation of forest-related actions and serve as an instrument of co-ordination between Community actions and the forest policies of the Member States</p>	<p>Vision: <i>"Forests for society: long-term multifunctional forestry fulfilling present and future societal needs and supporting forest-related livelihoods"</i></p> <p>COM(2006)302</p>
Council conclusions on an EU forest action plan (30-31 May 2005):	
<p>Point 6: The EU FS needs to be updated as a basis for the EU Forest Action Plan to take a proactive approach allowing the forest sector to enhance its competitiveness and economic viability, and to address the growing needs and expectations of society and the challenges of globalisation.</p> <p>Point 7: There is a need to strengthen coherence btw these policies and initiatives and to enhance coordination within the Commission and between Commission and the Member States</p> <p>Point 8: An EU Forest Action Plan should provide a coherent framework for the implementation of forest-related actions at Community and Member State level and serve as an instrument for coordination btw different Community actions and forest policies of Member States</p> <p>Point 9: Commission and Member States in consultation with stakeholders to elaborate the Action Plan</p> <p>Point 10: In a balanced way address economic, ecological and social dimensions of SFM, incl. the international context</p> <p>Point 11: A coherent set of actions, in line with the Lisbon and the Gothenburg strategies, based on clear objectives which should interact with and provide guidance to the objectives of other Community policies, as well as to the implementation of forest-related international commitments</p> <p>Point 12: Existing instruments to realise the proposed actions</p> <p>Point 13: Action Plan should compass both Community forest-related actions and forest-related actions in Member States, incl. NFPs</p> <p>Point 14: Enhancing coordination, communication and cooperation, especially the role envisaged for SFC</p>	<p>KA1: Examine the effects of globalisation on the economic viability and competitiveness of EU forestry</p> <p>KA3: Exchange and assess experiences on the valuation and marketing of non-wood forest goods and services</p> <p>KA4: Promote the use of forest biomass for energy generation</p> <p>KA5: Foster the cooperation between forest owners and enhance education and training in forestry</p> <p>KA10: Encourage environmental education and information</p> <p>KA11: Maintain and enhance the protective functions of forests</p> <p>KA12: Explore the potential of urban and peri-urban forests</p> <p>KA15: Apply OMC to national forest programmes</p>
European Parliament resolution on the implementation of a European Union forestry strategy, 16 Feb. 2006	
<p>EP resolution and recommendations are structured in 10 strategy elements which could contribute to the Action Plan work already underway:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Active participation in international processes relevant to forestry 2. Implementation of national forestry programmes in order to comply with international commitments entered into 3. Improving coordination, communication and cooperation in all fields of policy of relevance to forestry 4. Promoting sustainable forest management as part of policy on conserving and developing rural areas 5. Protecting Europe's forests 6. Protecting tropical forests 7. Mitigating climate change and contributing to sustainable energy supplies 8. Promoting competitiveness, employment and income in the forest sector 9. Promoting forest-related research and development 10. Promoting sustainable forest management by means of training and further training programmes 	

Did the EU FAP operationalise and achieve the Objectives defined in the EU Forestry Strategy?

The EU FAP operationalised the EU Forestry Strategy principles through its 18 Key Actions and activities implemented during 2007-2011. Achievement of the goals is dependent on follow-up at Community and Member State levels also after the Action Plan period. Although not all Key Actions can be seen triggering a direct effect at the stage of the ex-post evaluation, the Action Plan did influence several processes both in Member States and at the Community level. The main achievements – and added value in implementing the Forestry Strategy goals – refer to visibility of the forest sector, facilitation for improving coherence and coordination of activities between different Community actions and for improving coordination of activities between the Commission and the Member States.

The EU FAP and its multiannual work programme **operationalised** the EU Forestry Strategy principles through its 18 Key Actions and activities for 2007-2011. This can be seen as giving a focus and priorities for forestry-related issues, which are also reflected in Member State level priorities.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation was analysed in the Evaluation Question 1. In summary, the Action Plan was put into practice to a large extent as planned in the multiannual work programme, and the Action Plan provided a structure for information sharing as well as a framework for Community and Member States activities related to forests during 2007-2011. The implementation resulted in several concrete outputs (e.g. studies, reports, collection of technical expertise in SFC ad hoc working groups on specific topics, Member States' common views defined in the SFC opinions). Although at the point of the ex-post evaluation it is difficult to draw direct links from these outputs to activities triggered at national or Community level, an influence on a number of processes at both levels can be found.

The effect of EU FAP implementation on EU policies, on national forest policies and on improved coherence, coordination and cooperation was analysed in the Evaluation Question 2. In summary, the Action Plan has been a means to be informed about processes in other policy areas at the Community level. Although the Action Plan could not coordinate different sectoral policies, there can be found influence on a number of processes (e.g. R&D, rural development). The approach taken in the Member States has varied from one country to another, and the impact is not the same across EU27. The Action Plan has provided a frame of reference for national forest-related agendas, including forestry measures in the rural development programmes and giving an additional driver for a number of processes in other sectors too. Impact on other international processes than the pan-European Forest Europe process has been limited; merely, the EU forestry issues have remained on separate agendas. Furthermore, the Action Plan implementation has faced difficulties in keeping up with policy developments driven by international and global processes.

With regard to the contribution of EU FAP to the Forestry Strategy objectives, the ex-post evaluation survey results suggest that the main contribution of the EU FAP has been that of **improved coordination and communication** (See Figure 20). Several examples of improved information sharing and cooperation can be found in all EU FAP objectives. For example, a number of Member States report that sharing of information at EU level about forest owner cooperation and education and training in forestry (Key Action 5) and environmental education (Key Action 10) contributed to training and awareness raising, as well as the improved provision of educational services that can be seen partly attributable to EU FAP (particularly due to the development of national forest programmes in several Member States). It was also argued that the coordination between NFP and different stakeholder groups were improved – although the stakeholder assessments on this respect were more critical (see Evaluation Question 1.4). Furthermore, the SFC and its ad hoc working groups, studies, reports and SFC opinions contributed (and brought an added value) to the implementation of the EU Forestry

Strategy in terms of improved coordination and communication. The main added value has been to bring people from different subject areas together to share information and practices (e.g. giving structure and a setting for regular meetings of the SFC or sharing technical expertise in the ad hoc working groups). At the same time the ex-post evaluation surveys indicate that this impact has mainly remained within the forest sector; the forest communication strategy (Key Action 18) is seen as an important output – and a concrete tool to implement Forestry Strategy goals for improvement of public and consumer opinion (Art.15) – but whether there will be commitment and follow-up of the implementation of the communication strategy is also being questioned.

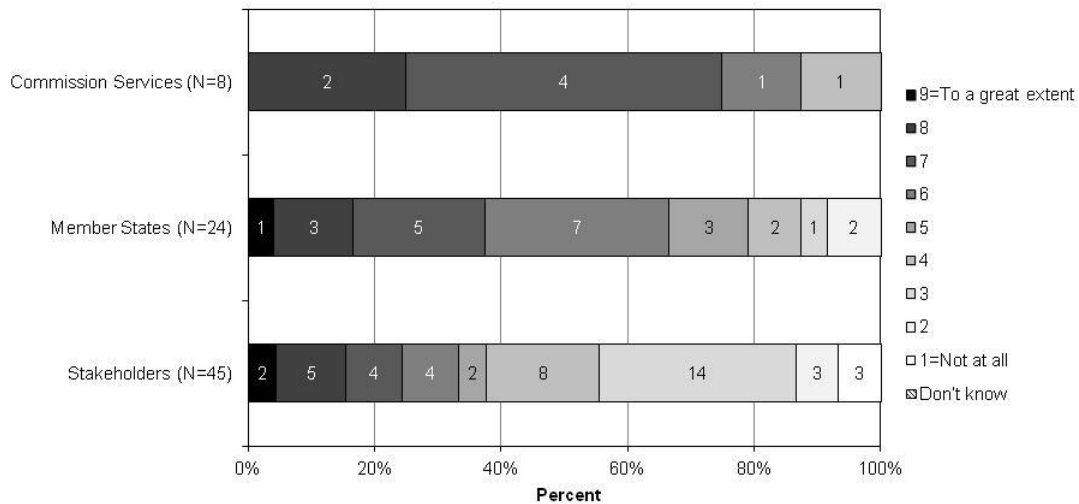


Figure 20 Extent to which the activities of the EU Forest Action Plan have contributed to improved coordination, communication and cooperation in all policy areas of relevance to the forest sector.

With regard to **implementation of international commitments**, Member States and stakeholders consider the EU FAP to have been more successful than the Commission (See Figure 21). The EU FAP Objective 2 Key Actions 6 and 7 are clearly focused on the UNFCCC processes on climate change, and the CBD and the new EU biodiversity targets, but the EU FAP is a non-financial, voluntary instrument and the relevant EU FAP activities were aimed at building capacity among the actors, easing the flow of information and strengthening the evidence base, rather than making a direct contribution to these targets. This necessarily limited ambition was on the whole achieved, and the EU FAP also helped to draw attention to the apparently limited use by Member States of the EAFRD forest-environment and Natura 2000 measures, which are the main source of EU financial support for forest biodiversity management across the EU27 Member States. Stakeholder respondents in the ex-post evaluation surveys note that the EU FAP made only a limited response to the more recent challenges to forests and demands on forest resources, in the context of EU climate and energy policies, and green economy. At the mid-term evaluation it was evident that the EU FAP was thought not to effectively support the EU contributions to international climate change processes.

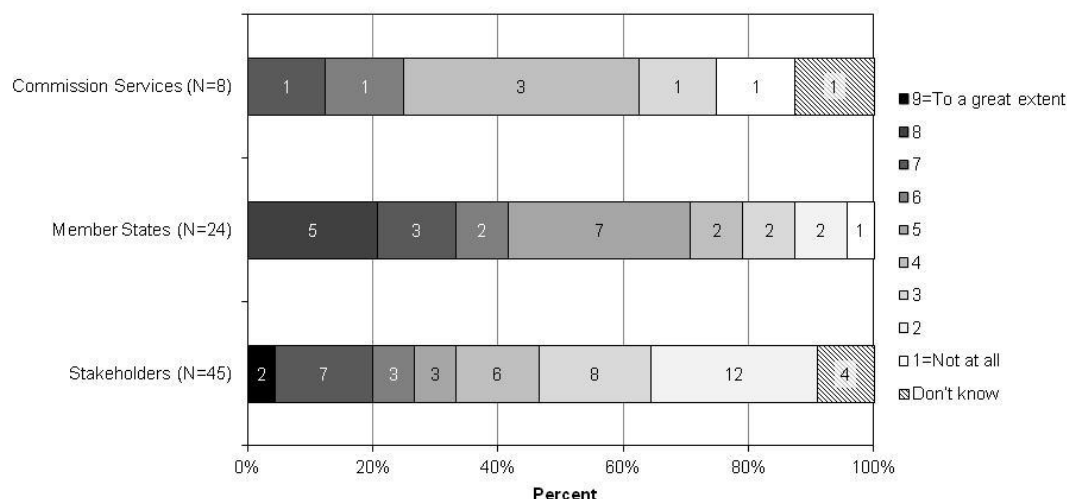


Figure 21 Extent to which the activities of the EU Forest Action Plan have contributed to the implementation of international commitments, principles and recommendations.

Key Actions 8 and 9 address more directly the EU Forest Strategy objectives to **monitor and protect the forest resources of the EU**. The coherence, coverage and availability of data has improved under European JRC Forest Data Centre (EFDAC, Key Action 8 / contribution to Forestry Strategy Art.7), as a result of significant commitment by the Commission and the voluntary participation by several Member States. Commission Services note in the ex-post evaluation surveys that there is a need to improve the information flow from the Member States to the EU level on their forest-related policies – even if the national processes produce results in line with the Forestry Strategy goals, at the moment these do not necessarily summarise achievements towards the EU goals. At the time of the EU FAP ex-post evaluation the follow-up actions to the Green Paper on forest protection and information are under way. The Commission Green Paper on forest protection and information and its open consultation and the European Parliament response addressed the need for better monitoring of EU forests, collecting data to inform EU policies and international commitments under UNFCCC and CBD; for example, coherent EU data forest damage, pest outbreaks, Green House Gas balances in forestry operations, impacts on forest biodiversity and trends in water and soil status. This reinforces the pressure to improve forest data originating from international policy developments, for example LULUCF reporting. Meanwhile the EU FAP adds value by triggering more structured and focused discussions in SFC meetings and increasing awareness across its representatives through activities such as LULUCF briefings, the SFC report and opinion on climate change and forests, and pushing for research questions addressing forests and climate change and, other forest-based topics in the Seventh Framework Programme.

The Forestry Strategy goal to **stimulate active participation in all forest-related international processes** specifically indicates the implementation of the resolutions of Ministerial Conference on Protection of Forests in Europe (now Forest Europe), and proactive participation in international discussion and negotiations, especially UNFF (Key Action 16). As with the implementation of international commitments also here Member States and stakeholders consider the EU FAP to have been more successful than the Commission (See Figure 22). The EU FAP has been a means to seek better integration – or coherence – between the EU process and the pan-European process, through joint events and publications, participation in working groups and preparation work for the Forest Europe process, as well as work on forest communication strategies. International forestry issues, on the other hand, have remained on a separate agenda from the EU FAP implementation (see

Evaluation Question 1.4). Furthermore, the international processes on climate change (UNFCCC and REDD+) and biodiversity (CBD) have become more important since the definition of the EU Forestry Strategy or the EU Forest Action Plan – more important than it perhaps was even foreseen at that point. During the EU FAP implementation in 2007-2011 this development has to an extent raised confusion on how forestry actors (both Member State ministries responsible for forestry issues and the various stakeholders in the forest sector) can actively participate and contribute to these processes, rather than merely following up what comes out from the deliberations at international fora and commitments defined at the Community level for EU targets for Green House Gas emissions, for renewable energy targets etc.

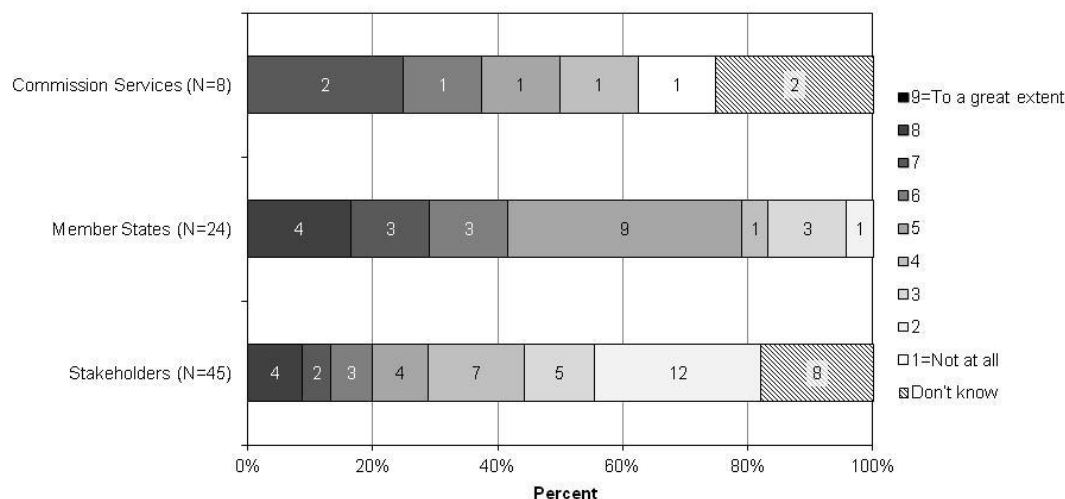


Figure 22 Extent to which the activities of the EU Forest Action Plan have contributed to active participation in all forest-related international processes.

Considering the objective of the Strategy to **improve the implementation of Sustainable Forest Management** and to further the principle of integration of SFM in forest-related policies, the Commission, Member States and stakeholders provide a mixed picture (See Figure 23). Results from the ex-post evaluation survey suggests that the EU FAP has been less successful, however, it can be noted that the EU FAP with its four objectives did address the SFM principles as a basis of structure for the Action Plan (see Evaluation Question 3), which was also addressed in national forest programmes in the Member States (see Evaluation Question 2). The work towards a European Forest Monitoring System (Key Action 8) followed the objective in broad terms, although the activities were insufficient to address the complexity of this Forestry Strategy objective, specifically in relation to forest production estimates, biodiversity in forests, carbon accounting, valuation of non-timber forest services and goods, forest genetic resources, and the effects of climatic change on forests and the forest sector³⁹. The importance of integrating biodiversity concerns into the use of CAP funds by Member States has been recognised, but not yet achieved in relation to forestry if the low uptake of forest-environment measures and direct Natura 2000 payments by Member States is taken as a proxy indication. One of the problems appears to be that there is no EU-wide baseline standard of Sustainable Forest Management, which can be used to define the reference level for these EAFRD measures (as there is for agri-environment payments). The apparent lack of interest or sense of urgency among Member State forestry authorities for forest biodiversity is evidenced by the rather superficial treatment of biodiversity issues in national forest programmes. This is evident despite the increasingly urgent need, at all levels of decision-making from Council to individual forest managers, to address the potential conflicts and need for coherence between certain key sustainability goals of the EU Forestry

³⁹ Summary of the public stakeholders' consultation to green paper, 2010

Strategy and Action Plan, the use of wood and non-wood products, the use of forest biomass for energy generation, the role of forests as carbon sinks and reservoirs and the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy.

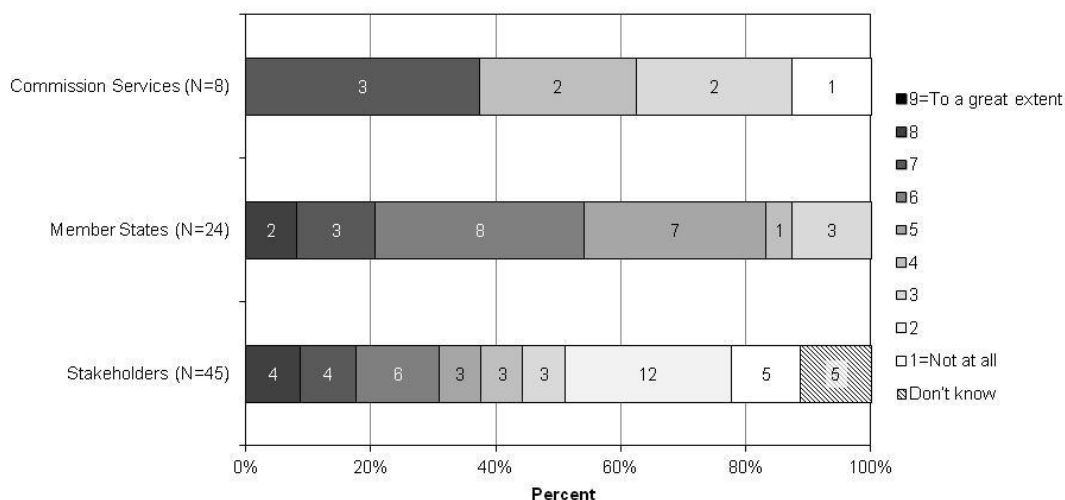


Figure 23 Extent to which the activities of the EU Forest Action Plan have contributed to the implementation of Sustainable Forest Management.

All in all, although the ex-post evaluation analysis gives a critical assessment on the achievements in the objectives defined in the Forestry Strategy (Community Actions Concerning Forests and Forestry, Art. 3-18), the EU FAP implementation did work out as a means to improve visibility of the forest sector, to facilitate better coherence and coordination of activities between different Community actions and to structure information-sharing between the Commission and Member States. The uptake of the results produced during the Action Plan implementation in 2007-2011 is a shared responsibility of the Member States and the Commission.

Could the same results have been achieved without the EU Forest Action Plan?

With regard to the forest-related topics addressed in the EU FAP, several processes are ongoing in parallel and interlinked with impact on forestry in the EU. The Action Plan was implemented together with other ongoing processes in other policy sectors (climate action, energy, industry) and in pan-European processes. Developments in other sectors and policy fields generated an increased interest in forests, and the EU FAP implementation was a means to address these developments and to keep the forestry-specific issues on the agenda. Trying to cover these developments without the EU FAP – through the inter-services structures within the Commission, Member States’ existing EU fora (e.g. Council Working Party on Forestry) or the stakeholder platforms at EU level – would most likely have resulted in a much more sporadic response in 2007-2011.

The EU Forest Action Plan as well as the EU Forestry Strategy respects that the responsibility for forestry policy lies with the Member States, and consequently the Action Plan provides a voluntary coordination instrument for coordinating processes at different levels and other sectors. With this background in mind, when the Commission and Member States were asked whether the results attributed to the EU FAP could have been achieved without the Action Plan, the answers are rather diverse and fragmented across the actors. As can be noted in Figure 24, approximately half (11) of the Member States responding to this question note that the EU FAP was essential for producing the results achieved by the implementation during 2007-2011. As alternative ways to produce the results, the Member States refer to National

Forest Programmes, although most of the respondents in this group recognize that the EU level approach would not have gained the cachet it now had through the EU Action Plan.

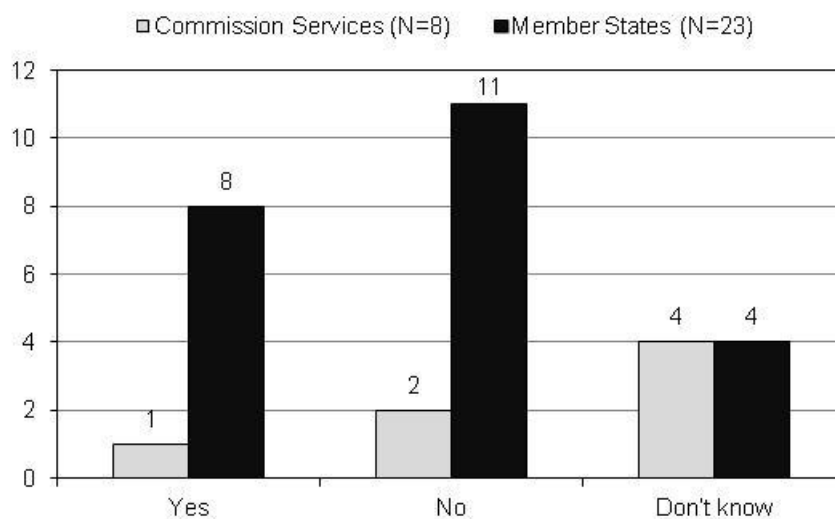


Figure 24 Could the same results have been produced without implementing the EU FAP in 2007-2011.

In general, the Member State and stakeholder respondents in the ex-post evaluation surveys note that the EU FAP has led to a more concentrated effort to implement the EU Forestry Strategy because of the regular updating of the achievements towards implementing the Key Actions (e.g. at the SFC). As such, it can be argued that more has been done towards achieving the EU Forestry Strategy than what would have happened without the EU FAP. At the same time the ex-post evaluation survey responses indicate that the current objectives of different EU policies affecting forests and forestry are seen to be even more contradictory than when launching the EU FAP in 2007. Although giving a structure for forestry-related deliberations and strengthening the connection between SFC and AGFC, there have been no major openings or new mechanisms for coordination and cooperation between the forest bodies, SFC, AGFC and AC-FBI – or other relevant EU-level advisory, management or expert groups – and the Council Working Party on Forestry.

The EU FAP and its work programme 2007-2011 are an added value in the implementation of the EU Forestry Strategy because they provided a framework for the SFC as well as for information sharing and coordination within the Commission. Although arguably, in the *absence of the EU FAP*, Member States would still have met to discuss forest-related issues and several studies and investigations would have been carried out – these activities would just not have had the framework to flag the activities towards specific goals and priorities as they were now defined in the Action Plan at the EU level. And although the Member States would have met in the Council meetings and have had the EU proposals on the table also without the EU FAP, the information about processes under preparation would have been much more sporadic compared with the five-year Action Plan now at least trying to cover the various forest-related issues. And although the Commission inter-services consultations take place also without the EU FAP, there would have been fewer means to foresee, not to mention coordinate, the preparation underway in other policy areas.

A majority of the respondents (Member State, Commission and stakeholder representatives) state that the effectiveness of the EU FAP was compromised by the *voluntary nature* of the instrument – most of the respondents fully recognising that this was the very core element defined in the EU Forestry Strategy in 1998. Given the nature of the Forestry Strategy as such, the Action Plan was a clear improvement. But one survey respondent also expressed that the

voluntary nature of the EU FAP has provided a rather easy excuse, both at Commission and Member State level, not to take action, especially when there is no political pressure to do so. However, also voluntary instruments can be structured and implemented if there is a strong commitment to the plan and to the common vision that the plan defines. In the ex-post evaluation surveys, this lack of structure was expressed, for example, in that the EU FAP had no measurable targets (no base-line or indicators or timeline for action), no clear responsibilities (who should do what at Commission and Member State level), no resource allocations (funds earmarked for implementation), no clear expected results (pressure for showing achievements), and no monitoring that the agreed follow-up steps have been taken (e.g. SFC opinions, working group reports). So even though the EU FAP defines more targeted actions than the principles defined in the EU Forestry Strategy, in the ex-post evaluation surveys it is argued that even more concrete steps and structures would have been needed in order to achieve the goals and expected impact. The present framework of the EU Forestry Strategy and the EU Forest Action Plan do not force this development. For a more structured approach, there would be need for strong commitment, political or other pressure and a leading vision to define more concrete targets and milestones towards a shared long-term goal.

The analysis of the Evaluation Question 2 already pointed out a number of examples of an added value from the EU FAP implementation both at EU and Member State levels. It is also noted that it is difficult to distinguish where the effect is derived from other parallel drivers (e.g. RES Directive, climate change and energy targets) that also address questions relevant for the EU FAP and the EU Forestry Strategy. Also the pan-European process through Forest Europe and the work by UNECE/FAO addressed the same topics during 2007-2011 (e.g. forest biomass use for energy, ecosystem payments, fragmented forest ownership impact on wood mobilisation, forest communication), thus also on their part giving a push to include forest and forestry-related topics on the Member States' agendas and national plans. In this respect, the EU FAP strengthened the direction and deliberations that are at the same time addressed in other processes.

Conclusions

It can be concluded that the EU FAP within its possibilities added benefits to the implementation of the forestry strategy, as it went beyond providing general principles, and led to a range of more structured activities which contributed to raising awareness and exchanging information across different Commission services and Member State NFPs regarding key forest-related issues and policy processes ongoing, initiatives under preparation in other sectors, such as rural development, energy, research and development, climate change commitments, biodiversity conservation, natural and man-made hazards, plant health and protection, public procurement, F-BI, as well as international processes.

The EU FAP covered to a large extent the issues raised in the Forestry Strategy, in its implementation report and in the following debate in 2005-2006. It defined objectives and actions, thus directing implementation more towards concrete actions than the principles of the EU Forestry Strategy itself. The EU FAP contributed to better visibility of the forest sector at the EU level. Furthermore, the Action Plan facilitated coherence and coordination of activities between different Commission services, as well as between Commission and Member States.

It remains, however, difficult to measure the direct impact of the Action Plan since there is no monitoring system for follow-up and up-take in Member States or at the Community level. The evaluation studies at mid-term and ex-post have been the only means to compile a more comprehensive picture on implementation, including activities also in the Member States.

Following the principle of subsidiarity and shared responsibility in implementation of the EU FAP, there have been no grounds for defining more concrete targets and responsibilities for the implementation, or resources earmarked for the Action Plan, and consequently no grounds for more structured monitoring of the activities and their effect. It is difficult to determine

perceivable effects and the extent to which activities (past and ongoing) are truly attributable to the EU FAP. For example, increased visibility of forestry issues is not solely attributable to EU FAP, but general developments, such as in the deliberations on climate change, nature protection and renewable energy fields have raised forests into the attention of policy and decision making beyond the forestry sector. This complex set-up makes it difficult to determine a true added value of the EU FAP in the implementation of the EU Forestry Strategy – many ongoing processes are interconnected and the causal links are not straightforward. It is clear that one of the principal factors influencing the lack of articulated ambition in the EU FAP structure (in relation to the before mentioned objectives of the Forestry Strategy) is the reliance on another objective of the Forestry Strategy: to entail a flexible approach, based in particular on the principle of subsidiarity.

However, when comparing the situation of the EU FAP implemented during 2007-2011 to a situation without an EU Action Plan – thus that the complex set of policy developments and processes were covered through the inter-services structures within the Commission, national forest policy implementation in the Member States and the existing EU fora (e.g. Council Working Party on Forestry), as well as the stakeholder platforms at the EU level – it can be concluded that without the EU FAP the forestry sector response to the developments would have been much more sporadic, and the resulted picture for forestry issues in the EU more scattered. The EU FAP implementation did have an added value to implementing the EU Forestry Strategy by compiling the topics for 2007-2011 under one agenda and by operationalising the principles of the EU Forestry Strategy for a shared implementation by the Commission and the Member States.

Key lessons learned and open questions as food for thought for elaborating possible follow-up of the Action Plan:

- The implementation of the EU FAP has addressed the same topics as the pan-European fora of Forest Europe and UNECE/FAO. Activities on forest biomass use for energy, wood mobilisation, payments for ecosystem services and forest communication have gained additional visibility in deliberations due to the attention given for them in parallel fora. *Is there a way to further strengthen the synergies between the pan-European, EU and national processes and their achievements?*
- The ex-post evaluation results illustrate the contradiction between, on one hand, the guiding principles of flexibility and voluntary implementation, and on the other hand, the expectations of concrete results and perceivable impacts both at Member State and Community levels. *Is this a question of either-or between a voluntary nature of an instrument and more measurable targets; or is it possible to define such milestones and mechanisms so that there would be a stronger commitment to the Action Plan?*

4.2.2 EQ5: Are the current objectives, key actions and activities of the EU Forest Action Plan still relevant in tackling the needs the Plan was intended to address? To what extent is the organisational set-up of the EU Forest Action Plan as a whole adequate for its purpose?

The EU Forestry Strategy (1998) highlights the issues to be addressed in the EU framework of the strategy. These include the policy framework with international processes related to forests (e.g. UNCED, UNFCCC, CBD and MCPFE) and the Community policy sectors affecting forestry (e.g. Common Agricultural Policy and rural development, environment, trade, internal market, research, industry, development cooperation and energy policies), as well as the threats to forests (e.g. land-use change, air pollution, climatic change, attacks from parasites and diseases). The needs have been assessed in the implementation report of the strategy in 2005, and defined as the EU Forest Action Plan objectives, key actions and activities in the debate following the implementation report in cooperation between the Commission and Member States as well as consultations with stakeholders. For example, the threats to forests were assessed in a study commissioned by the Commission to examine the main causes of

forest deterioration in Europe, and the efficiency of the current measures (*“Feasibility Study on means of combating forest dieback in the European Union”* (Requardt et al. 2007)), and the work has been continued in the EU Action Plan during 2007-2011, for example, the *“EU policy options for the protection of European forests against harmful impacts”* (IFP and Ecologic, 2009).

For the implementation of the strategy it has been defined that responsibility for forestry policy lies with the Member States, and international commitments are implemented through national or sub-national forest programmes or appropriate instruments by the Member States. At the stage of defining the Action Plan, it was identified that the existing structures for organisational set-up and existing financial instruments at the EU level will be the basis for the EU FAP implementation.

Needs the plan was intended to address: includes investigation of the EU Forestry Strategy definitions, the EU FAP Objectives, and new emerging issues.

Organisational set-up refers to the established bodies relevant in the implementation of the EU FAP at the EU or Member State level.

Adequacy of the organizational set-up refers to the extent which the organisational setup facilitates and supports the Action Plan implementation.

The analysis of the relevance of the EU FAP under Evaluation Question 5 includes the aspect of issues (e.g. the EU forestry strategy definitions, the EU FAP Objectives, forest information, but also emerging challenges such as climate change and wood mobilisation to meet renewable energy targets), instruments (e.g. the Action Plan, its Key Actions and activities) and organisational set-up (structures, mechanisms and division of responsibilities). The analysis for this question concludes the previous Evaluation Questions 1 to 4.

Response to this evaluation question is structured under three subheadings illustrating the judgement for this Evaluation Question:

- (1) *To what extent are the policy priorities of today the same as when the EU FAP was formulated?* The degree to which policy priorities today (as defined at the Member State, EU and international levels) are the same as when the EU FAP was formulated
- (2) *To what extent did the EU FAP respond to the developments?* The degree to which the objectives, Key Actions and activities of the Action Plan reflect the policy issues that emerged during 2007-2011 (key policy issues, societal needs and challenges)
- (3) *To what extent was the organisational set-up adequate for the implementation of the EU FAP?* The degree to which the institutional arrangements (established bodies relevant in the implementation of the EU FAP at the EU or Member States level) were effective and efficient, and in how far the organisational setup facilitates and supports the Action Plan implementation and achievement of its goals.

To what extent are the policy priorities of today the same as when the EU FAP was formulated?

There have been no totally new policy areas appearing during the implementation of the EU FAP in 2007-2011, but the international developments have caused – and are causing – shifts in priorities within the EU Forest Action Plan, or the forestry strategy. The ex-post evaluation survey responses express concern about increasing demands on forests in the future, and about difficulties to define a common vision for forests and energy policy in the EU.

The ex-post evaluation surveys indicate that Member State, stakeholder and Commission representatives see that the *range of policy areas* with regard to forestry in the EU has not changed significantly but the relative *priorities* have. Approximately half of the respondents in all three target groups assess a considerable change in the priorities (see Figure 25 and

Figure 26). The change in priorities is driven, for example, by the urgency of missed or approaching targets (biodiversity), the definition of new targets (renewable energy) and the emergence of new issues related to climate change mitigation (sustainability criteria for biofuels, LULUCF accounting) and climate change adaptation (increased risk of water stress, storms and fire). Many Member State and stakeholder representatives argued in one way or another that the introduction of the 20/20/20 targets on GHG emissions, energy efficiency and renewables in particular has changed the demands on the production function of forests.

International processes have addressed – and are addressing through the development of REDD – forests at an increasing scale. This increase in emphases and visibility of forests in international fora was not necessarily fully foreseen while preparing the Action Plan, or the EU Forestry Strategy. Although referring to international processes in several Key Actions (Key Action 6 on Kyoto Protocol, Key Action 7 on CBD and Key Action 16 on EU profile in international forest-related processes), the EU FAP has focused on EU forestry, thus consciously keeping the EU forestry issues as a separate agenda from the international ones.

Due to international developments concerned with climate change mitigation and adaptation, bioenergy has moved up the political agenda and discussions on the role forests, forestry and the forest sector in a green bio-economy (that is low carbon, resource-efficient and socially inclusive) has been a strongly emerging issue compared to a few years ago. A range of Member States and stakeholders also iterated that this has caused a shift in discussions from goals oriented towards forest conservation to the availability and sufficiency of wood resources for energy use. However, at the same time, it also resulted in a stronger interest in carbon management in forests, the provision of ecosystem services and the development of schemes for Payments for Ecosystem Services.

In the stakeholder responses more or less the same issues are raised: increasing and also conflicting *demands* on forests and forest-based resources (increasing demand for wood for several, often also competing purposes, as well as increasing demand for various functions of forests for protection, but also in a social context for urban and peri-urban areas); climate change impact but also *contradictory strategies* to deal with adaptation and mitigation to climate change, and; overall *fragmentation* of the policy landscape and increasing number of policies with impact on forests.

Although future possibilities – and challenges – are already recognised in the ex-post evaluation survey responses within the forestry sector, it is not clear to what extent the policy processes understand the potential – and limits – of forests providing solutions for the future challenges (see the Evaluation Question 2). The Europe2020 strategy and connected raw materials initiative, low-carbon roadmap etc. address forests and forestry recognising the international concerns related to forests (deforestation and degradation of forests impact on emissions). As important as the global issues are, at the same time a large share of forests' contribution to European societies and European citizens remains unrecognised in these strategy documents. Forest administrations and various stakeholders work to raise interest (and consequently financing and resources) for ensuring forest resilience in changing climate conditions, for nature conservation and protection of biodiversity, as well as for a full set of ecosystem services that forests provide in Europe (wood as a raw material, but also multiple other benefits). Severe damages – such as forest fires, windstorms, floods or pest incidences – occasionally raise public interest to support these efforts, but the positive aspect of forests and their contribution to society at large do not receive the same attention. Furthermore, debate about forests end up time after time in collision between different interests (whether about forests as such or about different use of the raw material from forests), which further undermines the efforts to increase forests' profile in today's policy priorities.

To what extent did the EU FAP respond to the developments?

The EU FAP response to changing priorities was to react to the developments at the international and EU level, rather than being proactive and foreseeing important developments with regard to forestry in the EU. The Action Plan provided a structure and framework for ongoing discussions and information sharing, but its ability to provide a more systematic approach, such as facilitating an open dialogue between different interests related to forests in the EU, was limited.

The motivation for the EU Forestry Strategy and the EU FAP was to address all relevant issues and developments related to forests in the EU in a comprehensive way. The implementation of the strategy and EU FAP can as such be understood as a flexible instrument that provided a framework in which issues relevant to forests can be dealt with.

The ex-post evaluation survey responses indicate that the EU FAP contained a *comprehensive agenda* to address forest-related issues during 2007-2011. Some respondents even stated that the Action Plan (with its 55 activities) was too extensive to allow for any genuine prioritisation and focusing of deliberations during the 5-year implementation period. All in all, the Action Plan had a detailed work programme that was noted as a *fixed* structure. This made it difficult for Member States to raise emerging issues to the agenda on an ad hoc basis, particularly as there was no time for new issues or deep reflections about the direction of the Action Plan, if all activities were to be accomplished in the set timeframe. However, the Action Plan can be seen dynamic in that studies were carried out addressing specific topics (e.g. forest protection and climate change) or that the SFC ad hoc working groups collected technical expertise on issues prioritised during implementation (e.g. the working group on climate change and forests was raised on the agenda after a strong push from the AGFC).

As noted in many ex-post evaluation survey responses, the EU FAPs reaction to the needs of the forest sector was *limited*. This opinion was put forward more forcefully by stakeholder respondents rather than by the Commission and Member State responses (see Figure 26). Examples put forward were the increased information needs for international commitments, as addressed in the Green Paper on forest protection and information, and the objective for proceeding towards a European forest monitoring system. The forest information Key Actions 8 and 9 (in Objective 2) had the *potential* to reflect these needs, such as, by developing additional data collection, EFFIS products, focusing research and transnational co-operation on the emerging issues. There is however no indication of a coherent commitment by Member States to achieve this potential, notwithstanding clear Council Conclusions, obvious stakeholder priorities and a call for action from the EP. Even more, and in contrast to the Action Plans' failure in fulfilling aspects of its potential, key issues were also identified by many respondents as not having been adequately reflected in the EU FAP and its activities. More specifically, the risk of potential intensification of forest management to deliver on related targets (e.g. Key Action 6 on climate change) and the possible impact on biodiversity and the provision of a portfolio of ecosystem services as well as the discussion on sustainability criteria (e.g. Key Action 7 on biodiversity and Key Action 4 on the emerging issue of biomass for bioenergy) were noted by the respondents. Even though general objectives were referred to, no clear prioritised actions were taken to address potential conflicts or to develop potential synergies beyond presentations and general discussions. For example, developing ecosystem-based strategies could offer cost-effective, proven and sustainable solutions to climate change adaptation (World Bank, 2009). Similar arguments can also be made as regards to sustainability criteria development (e.g. Key Actions 4 and 17), as well as the EU Timber Regulation, that respondents reported as emerging issues – or that became visible during the implementation in 2007-2011 – that the Action Plan could not find a way to respond to. These examples suggest that the EU FAP was a static tool with insufficient scope to react flexibly on key issues, and that it was dominated by other policy sectors.

Concerning competitiveness (Objective 1), the EU FAP structure assessed the impacts of globalisation on forestry (Key Action 1) and followed up the changing economic and financial situation affecting the sector development during 2007-2011. However, while information was provided for discussion, no specific measures were defined. Also with regard to natural hazards and their impact on forest sector, the EU FAP provided a framework to address forest-related issues (forest fires in Objective 2 Key Action 8 and forest protective functions in Objective 3 Key Action 11), but less attention was put on the EU FAP structures to find solutions for needs, such as challenges caused by the hazards to F-BI, or forest owners, and the impact on the long-term viability of the sector (especially in the regions that were most severely affected by disasters). As regards the innovativeness of the forest sector (Key Action 2) and the creation of markets for forest-based solutions, the EU FAP has not been a forum for opening new fields. Instead the Action Plan rather seems to defend the traditional supply-side approach, based on the existing production and consumption structures. This can be illustrated by the significant developments on the technological and industrial aspects of the green bio-economy, not only in the traditional F-BI, but often also other sectors (e.g. chemistry and energy). In contrast, the “supply end” solutions and SFM viewpoints have not been actively raised for discussion through the EU FAP framework (for example to address gaps in how SFM is defined across Member States). Moreover, considering other forest uses, the discussion has remained on traditional forestry sector topics, for example, payments for ecosystem services or valuation and marketing of non-marketed forest goods and services (Key Action 3) has not proceeded in a considerable manner into practical solutions for implementation in Member States or at Community level. Also urban and peri-urban forests and issues (Key Action 12) related to green infrastructure, human health impacts or innovative financing for public goods, have only received minor attention during the implementation of the EU FAP. In fact, the aspect of *new products and services* only came up to a limited extent in the ex-post evaluation survey responses.

As noted in the previous chapter, the ex-post evaluation survey responses suggest that the potentials as well as challenges for forestry in Europe are recognised by the sector itself (as reflected in the stakeholder responses) but to a lesser extent recognised by key actors in the EU (as reflected by Commission and Member State responses). The Action Plan did not find an effective way to address conflicting demands nor to mitigate the division of interests expressed in some of the ex-post evaluation survey responses. The changing priorities in other sectors led the discussion, suggesting that a more *procedural and systemic approach* would have been needed. The tools for such an approach can be found in aspects of, for example, forest owners’ education and advice support, environmental education, interdisciplinary research, integrated view on SFM, ex-ante impacts assessment methods, innovation support. All these approaches can be strengthened at EU and national (as well as regional and local) levels. NFPs and the EU Action Plan could have (and can in the future) be a framework to develop these approaches. The sharing of good practices at EU level about NFP implementation could build capacities needed for a new dialogue on forests at multiple levels.

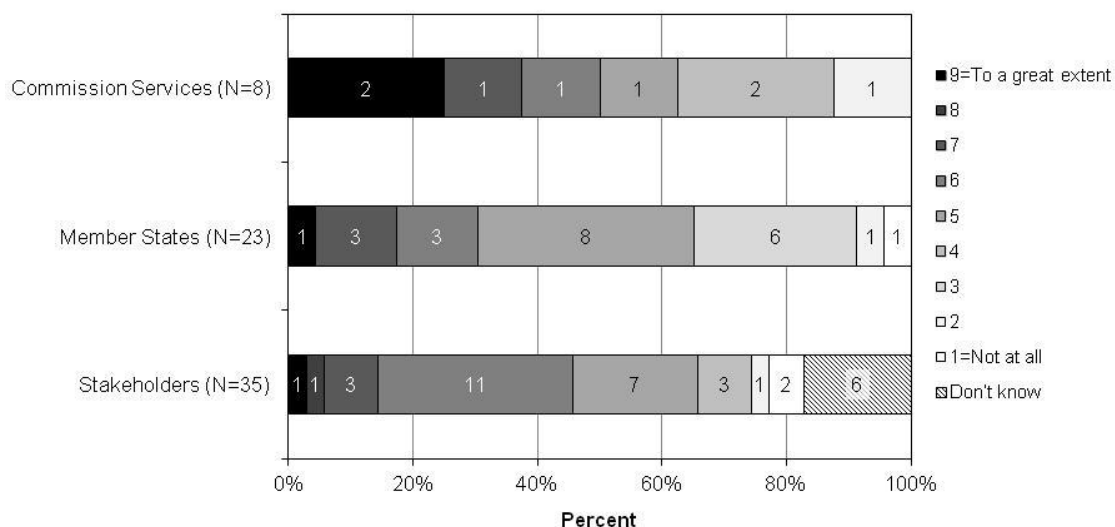


Figure 25 In your opinion, to what extent have forestry related policy priorities changed during the implementation of EU FAP 2007-2011 at the EU level?

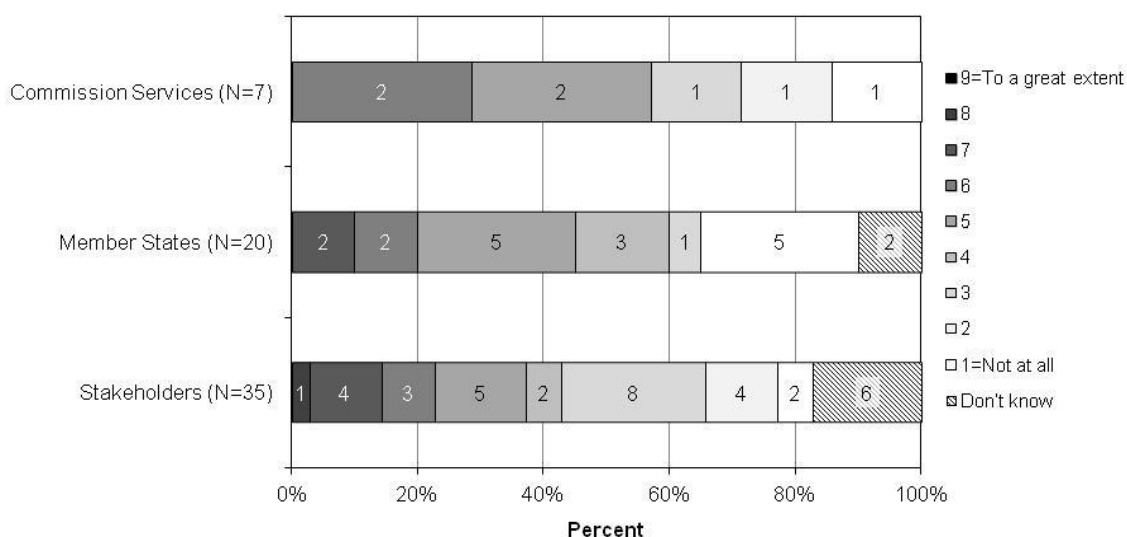


Figure 26 To what extent did implementation of the EU FAP in 2007-2011 address these changes in policy priorities, including new and emerging forest-related issues at the EU level?

To what extent was the organisational setup adequate for the implementation of the EU FAP?

The organisational set-up for the implementation of the EU FAP was based on existing structures and, as such, it served its purpose. But there are several lessons to be learned to discuss the follow-up: reporting of the Member State and also regional, cross-border achievements as contribution to the EU (and pan-European) goals, the stakeholder involvement and ways to support dialogue at multiple levels, as well as the role of various bodies active in the field, and relevant parallel fields related to forestry issues in the EU.

The organizational structure for the implementation of the EU FAP was defined in the Action Plan document (COM(2006)302): joint implementation of key actions by the Commission and

the Member States; collaboration with stakeholders on implementation of the Action Plan at Community level channelled mainly through the Advisory Group on Forestry and Cork (AGFC), and; the Standing Forestry Committee (SFC) as the coordinating body between the Commission and Member States for implementation of the Action Plan.

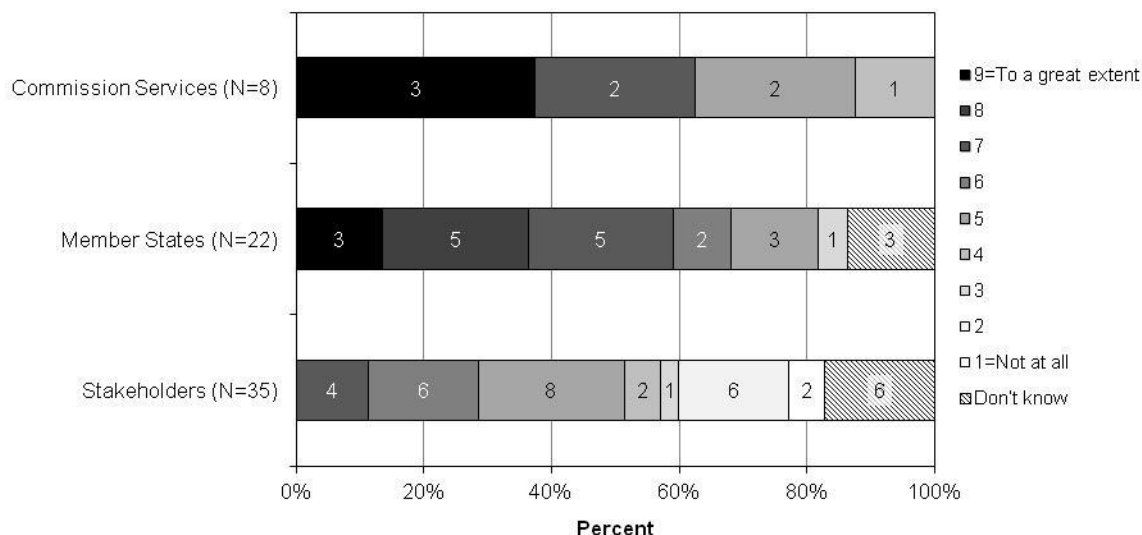


Figure 27 To what extent did the organisational set-up support the implementation of the EU FAP?

As already described in the analysis of implementation of the EU FAP Objective 4 (see Evaluation Question 1.4) the organisational set-up, using the above-mentioned existing structures, has served the purpose for implementation of EU FAP by providing a regular means and structure for information sharing. In the ex-post evaluation surveys, the stakeholders give more critical assessment on the structures supporting the implementation of the EU FAP (see Figure 27). However, a number of stakeholders see that the role of **SFC** has strengthened through implementation of the EU FAP (see Key Action 13 analysis in the Evaluation Question 1). At the same time the evaluation survey responses from the Commission, Member States and the stakeholders illustrate that the goal of *strengthening the role of SFC* is defined in a different manner. The role of SFC has several dimensions: it is a channel to convey forestry expertise and viewpoint to policy and regulative processes ongoing and under preparation in the Commission, as well as it is a platform for voluntary coordination of NFP implementation in EU27 – although for this latter there are different expectations in the Member States (see Evaluation Question 2). Furthermore, there is a notable weakness in the effectiveness of communicating the information presented and discussed in the SFC at national level beyond the remit of Member State representatives involved in the SFC and outside the forestry sector; both at the Commission and Member State levels there is a need to collect expertise from and communicate with colleagues in the energy sector, industry sector, nature protection, rural development etc. sectors about the policy processes and legislative proposals under preparation in the EU.

In the ex-post evaluation surveys, the value of SFC opinions and SFC ad hoc working groups and their deliverables was recognised by many, but with regard to climate change and forests, they were perceived as having worked too slow to react to emerging issues or even actively contribute to them. Furthermore, these initiatives have no legal status to direct either Member State or Commission action. The *advisory role* of SFC (or AGFC) was assessed critically due to the fact that often the information sharing about processes ongoing at EU level to the SFC happened at the stage when it was too late to influence the developments. Furthermore, joint meetings of SFC and AGFC were not arranged at the extent foreseen in the work programme, but instead AGFC Chairman participating in the SFC meetings, and stakeholder experts participating in the SFC ad hoc working groups arranged the communication between the two

committees. Lack of joint meetings between AGFC and SFC was seen as a disappointment in the stakeholder responses to the ex-post evaluation surveys. But Member State responses indicated also a need to reach a more holistic view, by joint meetings with SFC, AGFC and AC-FBI representatives.

During 2007-2011, **AGFC** has concluded joint statements – or “joint resolutions” as they are called in the AGFC documents – on forest fires and EU solidarity funds for natural disasters (2007 and revision in 2009 including other forest disasters), F-BI Communication (2008), and use of biomass (2009). These resolutions are annexed to the AGFC meeting minutes and publicly available from the December 2008 meeting onwards at the Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development consultations (advisory groups) website⁴⁰. A new element for structuring the work of AGFC was also the strategic agenda of the AGFC Chairman for 2009, 2010 and 2011. There has not been reporting on follow-up of the AGFC resolutions at Community level or Member State level, and in the ex-post evaluation surveys some stakeholder representatives conclude that the AGFC resolutions were ignored. Although, for example the SFC ad hoc WG on climate change and forests was established on initiative from the stakeholders (AGFC proposal in 2007). In addition to the above mentioned joint statements, the AGFC meeting documents also show that AGFC worked towards a number of other joint resolutions, although without concluding them. These included a joint resolution on sustainability criteria (2007), on joint position to climate change negotiations (2009, 2010) and resolution on rural development policy (2010).

The Advisory Committee on Community Policy regarding Forestry and Forest-based Industries (AC-FBI) has become more active for the second half of EU FAP implementation period, and altogether five meetings were arranged in 2009-2011 addressing the current situation of the F-BI sector, Commission initiatives relevant to the industry etc. Next to SFC (and AGFC and AC-FBI specifically referred to in the EU FAP) there are a number of other standing committees, advisory groups and similar working with regard to several Commission services; Habitat and Ornithology committees for Habitats directive and birds directive; GreenForce for forests and Natura2000; Standing Committee on Community Plant Health Regime (CPHR), Standing Committee on seeds and propagating material for agriculture, horticulture and forestry SCS and Standing Committee on plant health SCPH (Health and Consumer Protection); Committee on Renewable Energy Sources and Committee on the Sustainability of Biofuels and Bioliquids; social dialogue committees (whereof mainly wood working committee relevant to EU FAP); forest fires expert group; Working Group on Forestry Statistics (under Eurostat’s Standing Committee on Agricultural Statistics CPSA); Working Group on forest-related sinks (under the European Climate Change Programme), FLEGT committee; and the recently established forestry working group under the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) – to mention a few. There is no comprehensive mapping made on the groups working on forestry-related issues at Community level, and the “map” is changing as the policies and strategy targets change in addressing sustainable use of renewable resources in the EU.

The **Council Working Party on Forestry (WPF)** under the Agriculture and Fisheries Council is most relevant for forestry issues, but also other Council committees handle EU FAP related themes, such as the Working Party on International Environment Issues under the Environment Council. There is no reflection in the Council WPF meetings for follow-up of or direct connection to EU FAP implementation – other than 2005 discussion on the EU Forestry Strategy implementation report and 2006 about the EU FAP. During 2007-2011 the WPF meetings have concentrated on: international processes, such as UNFF, UNFCCC, CBD, ITTA MCPFE/FE, FAO and UNECE etc. international meetings; Canadian initiative for a global legally binding instrument on forests (2008/2009); European forest week (2008), FLEGT; legislative processes related to timber regulation and forest reproductive material; EU biodiversity strategy, Green Paper on Forest Protection and Information, prevention of forest fires, forest monitoring, and regular presentation of EU presidencies programmes and events, including forest directors generals meetings. In the ex-post evaluation surveys some respondents (Member State and Commission) state that the organisational set-up of EU FAP

⁴⁰ <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/consultations/advisory-groups/forestry-cork/>

led to some duplication of work between the SFC and WPF, as the nature of SFC changed from initial implementation body (management committee of Forest Focus regulation) to an advisory committee. It seems the definition of tasks and roles are not clear, or there are different expectations on the role of different parties at different stages of the EU policy making. The SFC is the Member States' forum to handle issues before adoption of proposals by the Commission, whereas the Council WPF's role starts when proposals are adopted. The role of the **European Parliament** did not come up in the ex-post survey responses. However, the Lisbon Treaty changed decision-making at EU level, and the co-decision procedure was already applied in the EU Timber Regulation (2009-2010). The political arena at EU level has changed and is still evolving, and there is need to take this into account when thinking of the future strategy and a possible Action Plan. New means for finding common ground between different decision making processes and levels as well as between the interests expressed in these fora need to be sought.

The Commission **Interservices Group (ISG) on forestry** (Key Action 14) was already described in the analysis for Evaluation Question 1.4: although there have been occasions when developments in the parallel policy areas to forestry were not optimally coordinated or the developments foreseen effectively, the ex-post evaluation survey responses by Member States and stakeholders acknowledge the steps towards improving the coordination within Commission. Due to the fact that the ISG is a Commission internal body, and no meeting documents are publicly available, the work done in the Commission remains largely unknown for outside eyes. Some Commission representatives indicated that the ordinary inter-services consultations and regular communication between Directorate-Generals would have been sufficient for their needs of information, but some Commission respondents emphasise the progress made and the need to continue the work of ISG on forestry. In addition to ISG on forestry there is also inter-services group on *international forestry* (coordinated by Directorate-General for the Environment), and the Directorates General can also establish additional inter-services groups for *specific tasks*. For example, an ISG on REDD/FLEGT issues has been meeting since 2011. The fields of operation of these three ISGs are different. But as the example of the EU Timber Regulation demonstrated (see Evaluation Question 1.4), there is increasing complexity and linkages between EU forestry and international forestry issues – including also developments in the pan-European level – and there might be need to review the communication and coordination structures within the Commission.

Although the Member State, Commission and (especially) stakeholder representatives' *expectations* of the Action Plan impacts were not always met – but the EU FAP remained an information sharing forum, with more informing from the Commission to the Member States than the Member States reporting to the Commission, and with indirect influence on EU policies parallel to forestry – the respondents of the ex-post evaluation surveys see little **alternative for the given set-up** of the Action Plan as a voluntary coordination instrument. When asked about alternative means for organisation, the need for higher level *political commitment* was mentioned, but also more practical steps, such as more regular distribution of AGFC outcomes to the SFC members, utilisation of internet-based consultative processes, and presentation of practical cases about regional level implementation and cross-border activities were called for.

Several respondents also iterated that problems in effectiveness of the Action Plan were not majorly driven by institutional settings, but due to the perceived lack of specific, measurable and time-bound (according to some also mandatory) targets and actions, as well as concrete means to foster collaboration and coordination between sectors and policies or to encourage national activities. As already noted in the previous analysis, the Forestry Strategy of 1998 does not give grounds for more mandatory structures or mechanisms. More structured ways to voluntary coordination would require stronger commitment to the common goals. The implementation of the EU FAP was undermined by a lack of a clear vision and common understanding on Sustainable Forest Management and well-balanced priorities – or a common understanding about an EU added value for forest-related matters. Although there were expectations to gain more, there is no pressure to put the Action Plan into practice or to report

progress towards the defined goals. Furthermore, one evaluation survey respondent pointed out that also the concept of *subsidiarity* is mostly taken as giving justification to address forest policy issues at the Member State level – at the same time, forest fires, windstorms, floods, drought, or pest incidences have in a very concrete way showed that sometimes the most suited level of addressing forest-related issues is not national level but regional, and often across the national borders. Although mentioned in the EU FAP (e.g. regional studies and investigations for forest protective functions in Key Action 11, and SFC as a forum for Member States to share recent developments in regional agreements and strategies on Mediterranean, Baltic Sea or Carpathian regions), this viewpoint is not fully recognised for implementation of the EU FAP and the EU Forestry Strategy goals.

Conclusions

As a conclusion, the EU FAP and its organisational set-up were adequate for their purpose, taking into account the core principles defined in the EU Forestry Strategy in 1998. The ex-post evaluation surveys indicate that there were higher expectations for the implementation of the Action Plan as well as the results and impacts achievable. However, achieving those expectations would have required higher level of commitment both to the plan, its implementation and its results.

With respect to the needs that the EU FAP was intended to address no totally new policy areas have appeared, but international developments have caused – and are causing – shifts in priorities that the Action Plan did not foresee to a full extent. The ex-post evaluation survey responses express concern about increasing demands on forests in the future, and about difficulties to define common vision about forests in the EU. The processes in climate change action and renewable energy targets, as well as the aspirations expressed in the bioeconomy strategy provide the forest sector with possibilities but also challenges ahead to fulfil the future needs.

The EU FAP response to changing needs was limited. In other words, the Action Plan gave a structure and framework for discussions and information sharing, but it did not aim at foreseeing developments that will have a major impact on forestry in the EU, in order to achieve a more proactive approach. Also its ability to facilitate open dialogue between different interests related to forests was limited. A more systematic response would have been needed, building on capacities and dialogue at multiple levels (EU, national, regional, local). For example, sharing of good practices at the EU level about NFP implementation could be a means to build capacities needed.

The organisational structure based on the existing structures (SFC, AGFC, and ISGF) was to a large extent purposeful for the implementation of the EU FAP in 2007-2011 – taking into account that the Action Plan was a voluntary instrument. However, more structured ways to coordinate could be utilised even if the Action Plan was voluntary – this would require clearer vision, target-setting and high-level political commitment to the goals defined as well as commitment to follow up the achievements. The principles of the EU Forestry Strategy would need to be reviewed together with assessing the Member States' preparedness to make EU level commitments for forests and forestry in the EU. This process has already been started in the SFC ad hoc working group on Forestry Strategy revision (2011-2012), and the working group results will be utilised in the deliberations about the follow-up of the EU FAP – together with the results of this ex-post evaluation.

In the process of defining the follow-up after the EU Forest Action Plan, the viewpoints of Member States, Commission and various stakeholders – as well as the external expert view of this ex-post evaluation – are valuable. But the debate needs to reach beyond the mere Action Plan implementation in the forestry sector, thus including beneficiaries of the intended measures at large. Dialogue at multiple levels would support finding common ground and clearer targets for actions to be taken. Bringing the achievements – as well as challenges – to an EU forum would help in understanding not only the complexity of issues at stake, but also in

setting a target for the future of the EU forests – or forests in Europe – that we want to ensure for the future generations.

Key lessons learned and open questions as food for thought for elaborating possible follow-up of the Action Plan:

- Although no totally new issues emerged on the policy landscape for forestry in the EU, the EU FAP could not fully foresee changing priorities due to international processes and developments in other sectors. The focus of the Action Plan is in forestry and supply side approach. At the same time there are already developments rising from international processes on carbon storage, emission trade and greenhouse gas accounting that can lead to several possible developments for forestry in the EU. Furthermore, also society developments (e.g. green economy, sustainable consumption and production, population developments, consumer preferences) affect the future needs for forests. *Is there a way to strengthen a more proactive approach and assess the impact of possible developments on forestry in the EU beyond the present trends?*
- The EU FAP implementation is to be presented to the Council and to the European Parliament after the five-year implementation period. The ex-post evaluation surveys highlight a need for stronger commitment and a high-level political interest on the Action Plan and its achievements. *What would be the fora and means to achieve such commitment and political – or also general public – interest on forestry in the EU?*

5 Conclusions and key recommendations

This chapter concludes the analysis of the five evaluation questions presented and discussed throughout the previous chapters. The purpose of the ex-post evaluation has not been to make policy statements for forest policy as regards the EU and its Member States. Rather the evaluation has aimed at assessing the implementation of the EU Forest Action Plan (2007-2011), its effectiveness, efficiency and relevance, as well as at highlighting good practices and shortcomings of the approach and contributing to the policy deliberations of the EU Forestry Strategy and possible follow-up of the Action Plan. This last chapter is structured into three sub-sections that follow the evaluation questions. In the end, some points are raised as key recommendations to be taken into consideration as lessons learnt or in the discussion about any follow-up to the EU FAP.

Was the EU Forest Action Plan implemented effectively? Did it contribute to sustainable forest management in Europe?

The EU Forest Action Plan was to a large extent put into practice as foreseen in the multiannual work programme, as was concluded in the implementation review (see chapter 2.3) and the analysis of effectiveness and efficiency (see chapter 4.1.1). The Action Plan was however a voluntary instrument, with no specific resources earmarked for implementation. It was rather based on existing resources, such as the Rural Development Programmes in the Member States and other EU and national funding instruments. It is clear from the analysis that some Key Actions found their role more naturally at EU level (e.g. objective 1 on economic aspects, objective 2 on environmental aspects, and objective 4 on coordination and communication), whereas other activities were mainly implemented at a national or even local levels (e.g. objective 3 on socio-cultural aspects, but also Key Action 5 on forest owner cooperation and Key Action 18 on visibility events). All in all, the activities carried out at a national or regional level, such as environmental education, forest owner cooperation or SFM training, were not fully acknowledged as a contribution to the EU FAP implementation, although there were also international cross-border activities to support the goals defined in the Action Plan. Furthermore, although the Action Plan addressed all three dimensions of sustainable development – the economic, environmental and socio-cultural aspects – it was concluded that the impact of the EU FAP on balancing the three dimensions of Sustainable Forest Management was limited (see chapter 4.1.3). In fact, they were often handled separately, instead of building capacities for an integrated approach. This suggests that the EU FAP would have benefited from more dialogue in several directions: a) horizontally across relevant policy fields, b) vertically between EU and MS levels, and c) with stakeholders from different societal groups in order to give a voice to different interests and perspectives. This could have contributed to reconciling differences between Member States, to allow regional and national activities to be acknowledged at EU level. This to accommodate different views on forests and in effect to increase acceptance and visibility of the EU FAP in all relevant policy fields and with relevant actors. This could have helped to find a common definition to support multifunctional and Sustainable Forest Management.

It is further clear from the evaluation that the Action Plan provided a structure for information sharing as well as a frame of reference for Community and Member State activities concerned with forestry during 2007-2011. The implementation generated several concrete outputs, such as studies, reports, workshops, collection of technical expertise in SFC ad hoc working groups on specific topics, and common Member States' views defined in the SFC opinions. It is nevertheless difficult to pinpoint effects or activities at Member State or Community level that were triggered specifically by the EU Forest Action Plan. Particularly as several policy processes and sectors are interlinked and connected with the forest sector in the EU, having an impact on forestry in the EU as well as the visibility of forest-related topics in policy deliberations at EU, national and international levels. However, as noted in the evaluation, the results showed that an influence can be seen at the EU level, for example, on the Seventh Framework Programme implementation for forest and forest sector research, on the definition of forestry measures in the preparation of the proposed new rural development regulation, as

well as inclusion of forest protective functions in several processes (see chapter 4.1.2). As regards the EU Forest Action Plan influence on national forest National Forest Programmes at Member State level, most countries replied that their programme considered the EU FAP to some extent. There is as such a varied and indirect influence of the Action Plan as an additional driver in other policies processes (e.g. forestry measures in rural development programmes, forest-based resources in bioenergy strategy or wood and wood products in public procurement guidelines). In addition, the Action Plan allowed for synergies with pan-European processes, especially Forest Europe, while the impact on other international processes was limited.

Several international policy developments, such as climate change deliberations, have caused shifts in priorities and the role of forests (e.g. renewable energy targets or green bio-economy aspirations) that were not foreseeable when preparing the Action Plan. The mid-term and ex-post evaluations have nevertheless provided time to reflect on the goals, measures and appropriateness of the Action Plan. Especially the mid-term evaluation allowed for the opportunity to modify the EU FAP implementation, if there was a need to do so. Taken together, the experiences from these evaluations suggest that there is a need to promote a more holistic approach to forest-related issues, to assess both the EU and international forestry issues together and to build capacities to foresee how the international processes affect forestry in the EU and how to respond the requirements they bring. This relates to land use, land use change and forestry or green house gas emissions reporting, but also economic viability of sustainable forest management in Europe, risk management and preparedness for climate change impacts.

Have the objectives of the EU Forest Action Plan been met? Were the instruments used appropriate, relevant, effective and efficient, and what was the role of key actors?

The impact of the EU FAP on its general objectives (e.g. improving long-term competitiveness, improving and protecting the environment, and contributing to the quality of life) is indirect, through information sharing, influencing policy processes and Rural Development Programmes for forestry measures as well as other instruments at EU and national levels. In the ex-post evaluation, the stakeholders emphasised the need to show an impact on the ground, such as improved profitability of forestry, measurable indication of steps towards the biodiversity targets, or better disaster preparedness. Although these kinds of concrete results would take more time than the five years of the EU FAP implementation to achieve, it demonstrates a need for a commitment to put the EU FAP results into use also after concluding the Action Plan in 2011.

As the analysis concluded, the EU FAP operationalised the principles defined in the EU Forestry Strategy (1998) into objectives, key actions and activities on a timeline (see chapter 4.2.1). Leverage of the results generated by the EU FAP is a shared responsibility of the Commission and Member States also beyond the duration of the Action Plan. Thus, for example, the specific studies, working group results and SFC opinions remain for use at the national and regional levels, as well as, for uptake in the EU processes within the Commission and in the Member States when preparing for different working parties, advisory and management committees or expert groups at the EU level. As a matter of fact, uptake at Member State and Community level remains low, with no milestones agreed on, and with only a minor contribution to EU level goals.

On the one hand, the mid-term and ex-post evaluations have demonstrated that the EU FAP contributed to improved communication and that the Action Plan emphasised the need for improved policy coherence. On the other hand, as explained in the analysis, developments in other sectors (e.g. renewable energy targets, climate action or bioeconomy strategy) often overruled the forest sector (see chapter 4.2.2). The EU FAP could at its best react to the developments, for example, by setting up a working group, carrying out a study or defining a joint statement of Member States in the SFC. In fact, the ex-post evaluation survey respondents called for a more proactive and holistic approach. This is however made more

difficult by the fact that there is no solid ground for a strong “EU forestry” message that could be delivered as a response to the ongoing processes. As such, a coherent and pro-active approach to forest resources in the EU and their governance, with an effective co-ordination between the Community actions and the forest policies in the Member States, was not achieved through the EU FAP implementation. A more effective co-ordination would require a stronger commitment of the leading actors than what was seen during the EU FAP implementation (2007-2011), in particular on MS level, or a stronger institutional framework, which is currently not provided within the existing instruments, the EU Forestry Strategy and the EU Forest Action Plan.

The analysis also concluded that the organisational set-up of the EU FAP was largely purposeful for its implementation (see chapter 4.2.2). At the same time, the survey responses illustrated that there were different understandings and expectations of the Action Plan, in terms of the role of the SFC and the Council Working Party on Forestry, several Commission Interservices groups related to forests, stakeholder involvement and the interactions between the SFC and AGFC. The effectiveness and impacts of the Action Plan were undermined by these different expectations and approaches to implementation of the Action Plan, as well as, by varying commitments to action, such as voluntary reporting of results and achievements by Member States. For a more structured implementation of an EU Action Plan a clearer vision, target setting and monitoring as well as political commitment by the core actors would be beneficial.

Was the EU Forest Action Plan the most suitable framework for forest-related actions and instrument of coordination between the Community and Member States?

The EU Forestry Strategy does not force more binding targets or more compelling structures to implement forest policies or define criteria and indicators for implementation of Sustainable Forest Management across the EU27. The achievements of the EU FAP have as such to be seen within the framework of the EU Forestry Strategy (1998) definitions. As repeated in this evaluation, the Forestry Strategy and the Action Plan were voluntary instruments to ensure better coordination of forest-related issues. The ex-post evaluation analysis shows that there are limitations to this approach in terms of having an impact on policy processes at the EU level or to implementation at Member State level. Without a vision, commitment and targets for EU forests, the forest sector response to developments in other policy areas (e.g. climate action and energy) remains weak. Member State reporting to the EU level also lacks consistency as a consequence. The contribution of the EU FAP for better cooperation and coordination between actors is largely restricted to improved information sharing. Although this is already an added value compared with there having been no EU FAP, the results demonstrate a wish for a more structured approach, better defined goals and monitoring of achievements, as well as higher level of commitment to implementation. Recent policy developments, such as on climate change, and concerns over forest resilience and increasing demands on renewable resources, require a holistic approach to allow the forest sector to contribute to the Europe 2020 goal for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. This approach should take into account current societal demands, future needs and contradictory processes affecting the forest sector.

The EU study on policy options for the protection of European forests against harmful impacts (IFP and Ecologic, 2009) investigated four options for a Community approach to forest protection: (1) Continue and Improve Current Approach; (2) Forest Monitoring for Europe; (3) Forest Framework Directive; and (4) Open Method of Coordination. This study is not directly applicable as regards any conclusions about the suitability of the EU Forest Action Plan, mainly because the Action Plan covers the three dimensions of Sustainable Forest Management (economic, environmental and socio-cultural), as well as, objective 4 on coordination and policy coherence. However, the study is useful in terms of ongoing deliberations on the future EU Forest Strategy and a possible Action Plan. The view concluded in the study on a Community approach to forest protection “*the most effective options are more likely to provoke the highest degree of political resistance*” is also confirmed by the evaluation

survey respondents. There is wish to gain more through an EU level approach, but there is a reluctance for more harmonisation at the EU level. With the current EU Forestry Strategy, there were as such few options for the EU Forest Action Plan. To make forest policies in the EU more coherent, it is clear that the Action Plan proved to be beneficial, but based on experiences from its implementation (2007-2011) a more structured approach and stronger political support would be needed to reach a higher ambition for an EU approach.

Key recommendations

The ex-post evaluation collected key lessons learnt from the EU FAP implementation, lessons that were summarised at the end of each Evaluation Question chapter (see chapter 4.1.1. to 4.2.2). The following key recommendations are put forward as a contribution to the deliberations concerned with reviewing the EU Forestry Strategy and the possible follow-up to the EU Forest Action Plan. These correspond to viewpoints from the external evaluation team and may add to the work that is already ongoing in the two SFC ad hoc working groups on forest monitoring and information and on the future EU Forestry Strategy.

1. In order to increase commitment to a EU Forest Action Plan, a joint effort is needed to develop and operationalise a common vision of multi-purpose and Sustainable Forest Management in Europe.

In the design of the EU FAP, the concepts of multipurpose and Sustainable Forest Management are stated in the vision "*Forests for society: long-term multifunctional forestry fulfilling present and future societal needs and supporting forest-related livelihoods*". These concepts were integrated into the EU FAP without further assessment or operationalisation. In fact, during the implementation of the Action Plan, the three dimensions of sustainable development were addressed separately, rather than providing a holistic and integrated approach to forest management and policy. Amongst other things, this led to difficulties in defining a common "EU forestry" response to ongoing processes, such as the role of forests in climate change adaptation and mitigation, and the trade-offs between biodiversity conservation and the demand for forest biomass for energy generation. In order to reach a common vision on multi-purpose and Sustainable Forest Management in Europe the following aspects should be considered:

- Assess present and future societal demands on forests;
- Ensure that the three dimensions of sustainable development are balanced as well as strengthen and define a holistic view of Sustainable Forest Management in the EU;
- Build capacities at both EU and Member State levels to address new challenges and new societal demands for sustainable and innovative forest management (e.g. in forest information and monitoring, research and innovation, education, advisory services and communication).

2. In order to support effects and impacts of a EU Action Plan, strengthened instruments and structure for mutual information exchange and joint action are needed.

Good practices in the implementation of the EU FAP included the SFC annual work programmes and regular meetings, studies and research in support of the Action Plan, SFC ad hoc working groups, joint statements of the Member States (e.g. SFC opinions), as well as workshops and conferences to exchange Member States' practices. The Action Plan was less successful in ensuring a proactive and holistic approach (for example influence on other policy sectors), in following up of activities (e.g. uptake of reports, recommendations and SFC opinions), and in collecting comprehensive information from the Member States about national forest policies or implementation of the EU FAP goals. Although the EU Forestry Strategy or the EU Forest Action Plan gave no fixed targets or monitoring mechanisms, there would be options for improving effectiveness of an Action Plan, as well as improving collaboration and communication across sectors and different levels of implementation. In order to reach better effectiveness and impacts of the Action Plan implementation, the

following aspects should be considered:

- Define priorities and detailed targets for action.
- Link EU and Member State level funding strategies and plans to the EU Forestry Strategy and the EU Forest Action Plan priorities and actions.
- Strengthen coherent cross-sectoral planning, funding and implementation of activities;
- Maintain the possibility to define additional actions or re-focus existing ones if the need arises during the implementation period.
- Set-up a clear mechanism for monitoring, evaluating and reporting.
- Revise the mechanisms for involving stakeholders from economic, environmental and social interest fields.
- Advance dialogue to support public awareness raising, science-policy-practice interaction, and improved preparedness for emerging challenges and opportunities.

It is important that the outcome of the EU FAP ex-post evaluation is discussed in open dialogue within the Commission, in the Standing Forestry Committee and the Council Working Party on Forestry, as well as in the Member States and in consultation with key stakeholders. In the process of defining the follow-up after the EU Forest Action Plan, the viewpoints of Member States, Commission and various stakeholders are valuable. But the debate needs to reach beyond the mere Action Plan implementation in the forestry sector, to include beneficiaries of the intended measures at large. Forests can contribute to the goals defined in the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, but in order to ensure this contribution, the economic, environmental and socio-cultural aspects of forests, as well as the potential trade-offs between the three dimensions of sustainable development need to be recognised for a vision of forestry in the EU.