

Guidelines on

Defining, Mapping, Monitoring and Strictly Protecting EU Primary & Old-Growth Forests



The Policy Context

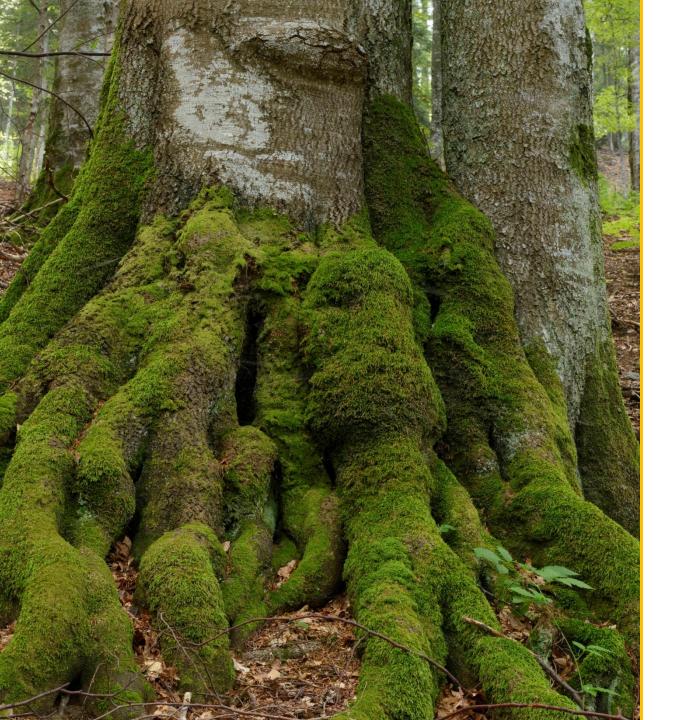
EU Biodiversity & EU Forest Strategies for 2030:

"All the EU's remaining primary and old-growth forests should be strictly protected"

To support this, the Commission will develop in close collaboration with Member States and stakeholders guidelines on:

- on the definition of primary and old-growth forests, including their definition, mapping, monitoring and strict protection
- closer-to-nature-forestry practices
- biodiversity-friendly afforestation, reforestation and tree planting





Guideline Development:

A collaborative approach

- Prepared in active dialogue with Member States Experts and key stakeholders (Forest & Nature expert group)
- 3 years process, eight "rounds"
- Voluntary character designed to complement regulatory framework and trigger discussions and support further implementation at Member States level



Context and approach

- ➤ Objective: facilitate the implementation of the goal of strictly protecting all the remaining primary and old-growth forests in the EU.
 - > By providing reliable and scientifically sound definitions
- Definitions based on existing work on the global level (primary forests) and European level (old-growth forests)
- Leaves flexibility to Member States to apply the criteria to the national context



Definitions & operational criteria

Primary forest: 'Naturally regenerated forest of native tree species, where there are no clearly visible indications of human activities, and the ecological processes are not significantly disturbed'

~FAO Forest Resource Assessment

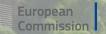
Old-growth forest: 'A forest stand or area consisting of native tree species that have developed, predominantly through natural processes, structures and dynamics normally associated with late-seral developmental phases in primary or undisturbed forests of the same type. Signs of former human activities may be visible, but they are gradually disappearing or too limited to significantly disturb natural processes.'



Definition OGF – explanatory note

- Planted and sowed forests with native trees not excluded
- Includes forest areas where indigenous peoples engage in traditional forest stewardship activities
- Forests for which there is evidence of active forest management excluded.
- Includes stands affected by natural disturbances. Once mapped, strict protection should apply also if a stand-replacing disturbance causes temporary absence of some indicators





Indicators and Mapping

- Mapping to be carried out once methodology for identification developed on the national level (e.g. setting thresholds, adapting the indicator list)
- To be aligned with definitions and criteria, and based on indicators

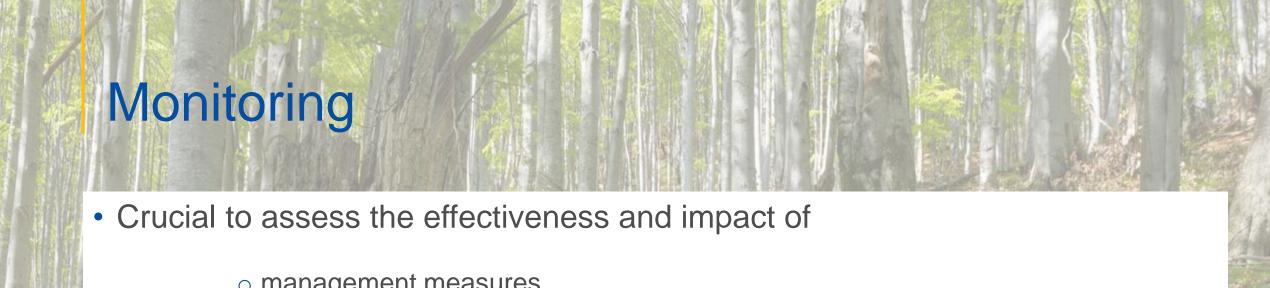
Main indicators: Native tree species, Deadwood, Old or Large Trees

<u>Complementary indicators:</u> Habitat trees, Structural Complexity, Indicator species, Stand origin

- Methodologies to be science-based and developed transparently
- Pre-screening: remote-sensing, existing data from forest owners, research communities, HCV mapping → on-site verification

Strict protection

- Old growth and Primary forest have high ecological value:
 - strict protection
- Only limited and well-controlled activities that do not interfere with natural processes or support and enhance them to be allowed
- Case-by-case assessment of permissible activities (research, disaster prevention, invasive species etc.)
- Buffer zones:
 - 1) Avoid negative impact of management practices in the surrounding areas on protected area
 - Avoid negative spill-over effect of natural processes in protected forests on management objectives of the surrounding areas



- o management measures,
- human and natural disturbances,
- o climate change.
- Focus on attributes and indicators identified in the guidelines
- Coordinated or integrated with NFIs, Habitats Directive monitoring



Timetable for implementation

Latest date
Beginning 2023
End 2023
Mid 2025
End 2025
T. 12020
End 2029



Thank you!

