

## *Virgin forests*

### Definition:

According to Article 7 lit. (k) and (e) of the “Protocol on Sustainable Forest Management to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians” (hereinafter Forest Protocol- FP), “virgin forests” means natural forests which have not been influenced directly by human activities in their development and “natural forest” means forests composed of tree species indigenous to the area with most of the principal characteristics and key elements of native ecosystems, such as complexity, structure and diversity.

### Objective:

The purpose of this definition is to detail criteria and indicators for virgin forests identification, mapping and strict protection.

### CRITERIA & INDICATORS FOR SELECTION OF VIRGIN FORESTS IN THE CARPATHIANS

A1	Criterion:	Naturalness
Indicators:		Defining:
A1.1.	Species composition	Forests formed of <u>native/autochtonous tree species according to potential natural forest types.</u>
A1.2	Structure	Cyclic ecosystems with complex structures, which include <u>all stages of small development circles</u> (some phases may be present only in small areas) in a <u>mosaic structure</u> (horizontal) and <u>vertically layered, according to the natural type of forest.</u> Range of tree ages proved by biometric characteristic.
		Occurrence of trees with exceptional dimensions according to the site conditions and species, and <u>signs of physiological decline.</u>
A1.3	Deadwood	Presence of deadwood (lying and standing) at all stages of degradation and all over the forest surface.
A1.4	<u>Human activities which influenced the development, structure and dynamic of the</u>	<b>Infrastructure:</b> No documented evidence and no visible traces of forest exploitation infrastructure (e.g. absence of remnants of facilities of wood water transport supporting walls, regulating facilities roads, trails, dams, cable systems, etc.) or other forestry machinery recent traffic. Limited traces of pedestrian activities are allowed (pathways not wider than 1 m).

	ecosystem	<p><b>Felling:</b> No felling occurred in the past, confirmed by documentary evidence (by forest inventory and planning documents, archives, etc.). No visible traces of harvesting which has influenced the development of forests.</p> <p><b>Non wood forest products:</b> No visible traces of extensive gathering of such products (mushrooms, berries, fruits, medicinal herbs, etc.). The collection of such products is acceptable unless there are visible traces of extensive gathering of such products.</p> <p><b>Forest litter removal:</b> No visible traces and no documentary evidence (by forest inventory and planning documents, archives, etc.).</p> <p><b>Grazing:</b> No visible traces and no documentary evidence of grazing/soil erosion (by forest inventory and planning documents, archives, etc.). Acceptable: occasional passing of livestock to and from pastures without impact on the forest development.</p> <p><b>Recreation /education infrastructure:</b> No recreation infrastructure.</p>
<b>A2</b>	<b>Criterion:</b>	<b>Area &amp; Delimitation</b>
<b>Indicators:</b>		<b>Defining:</b>
<b>A2.1</b>	<u>Area</u> of forest plot stand	<b>Minimum 20 ha.</b>
<b>A2.2</b>	<u>Shape</u> of forest plot stand	Minimum distance between any two opposite boundary points does not decrease below 200 m. This rule does not apply to the remains of relic/rare forests ecosystems or relic tree stands, surrounded by natural stands.

**Guidelines:**

The evaluation for 1.2 and 1.3 will take into consideration the structure valuation – not on a surface unit but on the overall considered polygon. This description should be considered mainly for the minimum area (20 ha) in order to be sure that such a small patch does not occur due to anthropic intervention.

In declaring virgin forests, the Parties can include surfaces that do not meet the naturalness requirements or non-forest ecosystems up to 20% of the forest plot stands that permit self-maintenance of the forest ecosystems and/or for administrative purposes.

In declaring virgin forest the Parties should prefer natural margins (hill tops, ridges, valleys, streams, forest edges). Accepted artificial margins are:  
- permanent roads;

- high-voltage corridors or other utilities;
- forest compartment's boundaries;
- railways, etc.

Where possible, the Parties should conduct assessments at forest management entity level.