

virgin forests

Defining:
According to Art. 7 lit. (k) of the “Protocol on Sustainable Forest Management to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians” (hereinafter Forest Protocol- FP), through “virgin forests” we understand natural forests which didn’t undergo direct human activities during their existence to influence their development /ecological processes.

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 TRANSBOUNDARY REGION

A1	Criterion:	Naturalness
Indicators:		Defining:
A1.1	Species composition	Forests formed of <u>native/autochtonous species according to potential natural forest types.</u>
A 1.2	Origin	Naturally regenerated forests.
A1.3	Structure	Cyclic ecosystems with complex structures, which include <u>all developmental phases</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> Presence of a broad range of tree ages and sizes
		Occurrence of trees with exceptional dimensions according to the site conditions and species, and <u>signs of physiological decline.</u>
A1.4	Deadwood	Presence of the <u>deadwood</u> lying and standing) at all stages of degradation and all over the forest surface. Presence of the deadwood should be assessed on the basis of forest type, ecosystem structure and site conditions.
A1.5.1	<u>Human activities which influenced the development, structure and dynamic of the</u>	Infrastructure: No documented evidences and/or visible traces of forest exploitation infrastructure (e.g. timber-floating river or waterways, 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.

	ecosystem	<p>Felling: No felling occurred in the past, confirmed by documentary evidence (by forest inventory and planning documents, archives, etc.). Single visible traces of occasional harvesting (removal and/or partial damage) of not more than 5 trees (stumps with diameter above 15 cm) but not more than 5% of standing timber stock harvested per ha).</p> <p>Non wood forest products: No visible traces of extensive gathering of such products (mushrooms, berries, fruits, medicinal herbs, etc.). Sporadic collection of such products is accepted.</p> <p>Forest litter removal: No visible traces /documentary evidence (by forest inventory and planning documents, archives, etc.).</p> <p>Grazing: No visible traces/documentary evidence of grazing/soil erosion (by forest inventory and planning documents, archives, etc.). Acceptable: occasional passing of livestock to and from pastures.</p> <p>Recreation /education infrastructure: No impact of recreation infrastructure.</p>
A2	Criterion:	Surface & Delimitation
	Indicators:	Defining:
A2.1	<u>Area</u> of forest plot	Minimum 20 ha. Minimum of 4 ha in the case of remains of relic/rare forests ecosystems or relic tree stands, surrounded by natural stands.
A2.2	<u>Shape</u> of forest plot	Minimum dimension of a plot is 200 m. In the case of remains of relic/rare forests ecosystems or relic tree stands, surrounded by natural stands, the above minimum dimension does not apply.

Guidelines:

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 allowing self-maintaining 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;

- compartment boundaries;
- railways, etc.

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