











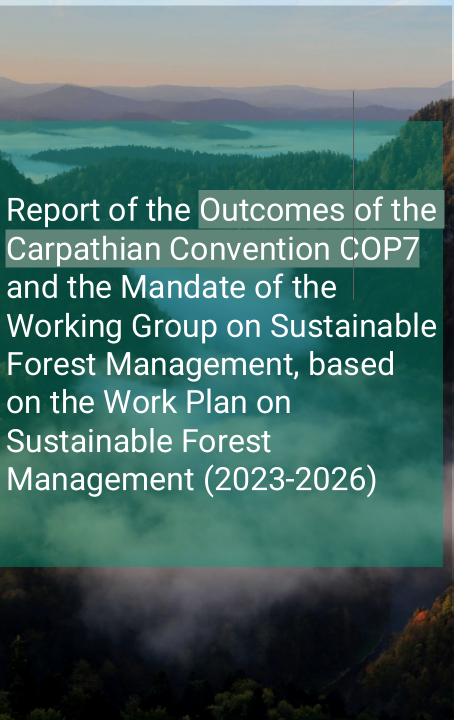
Carpathian Convention 10th Meeting of the Working Group on Sustainable Forest Management

Water Research Institute. Bratislava, Slovakia 28-29 of April, 2025





Carpathian Convention COP7
20 Years of the Carpathian Convention:
Assessing Progress, Inspiring Action,
and Shaping the Future.



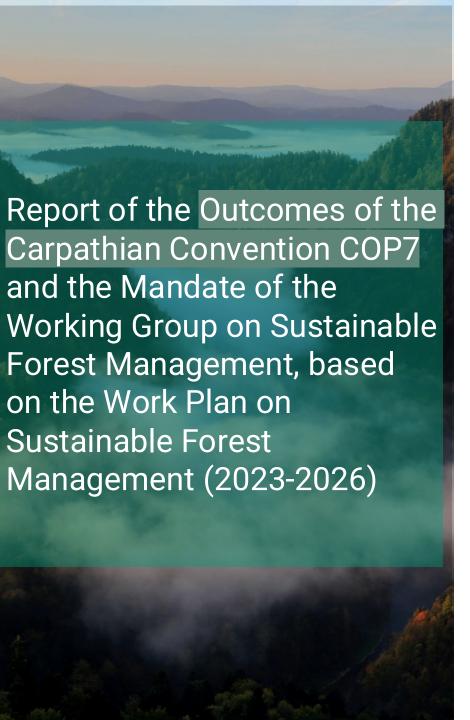
1. Recognizing the importance of the Protocol on Sustainable Forest Management to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians

(hereinafter Forest Protocol), further encourages all Parties to actively participate in implementation of the provisions of the Forest Protocol and share expertise for balanced implementation of the Carpathian Convention, and requests the WG Forest and the Secretariat to support the Parties in this process.

- 2. Welcomes the development of the Inventory of Virgin Forests of the Carpathians, based on officially reported data by the Parties, which shall strengthen protection of one of the last remining virgin forests in Europe, and in this respect contribute to the efforts at the European level, appreciates the contribution of European Environment Agency (EEA), the European Topic Centre on Urban, Land, and Soil Systems (ETC-ULS) and of the Secretariat to the process.
- 3. Further to the DECISION COP7/13 paragraph 1, adopts the Criteria and indicators for selection of quasi-virgin forests in the Carpathians, and further invites the Parties to consider extending the Inventory of Virgin Forests of the Carpathians to other degrees of naturalness particularly quasi-virgin forests, as well as the WG Forest, relevant stakeholders, and especially the European Environment Agency (EEA) to cooperate on and contribute to the process with support of the Secretariat.

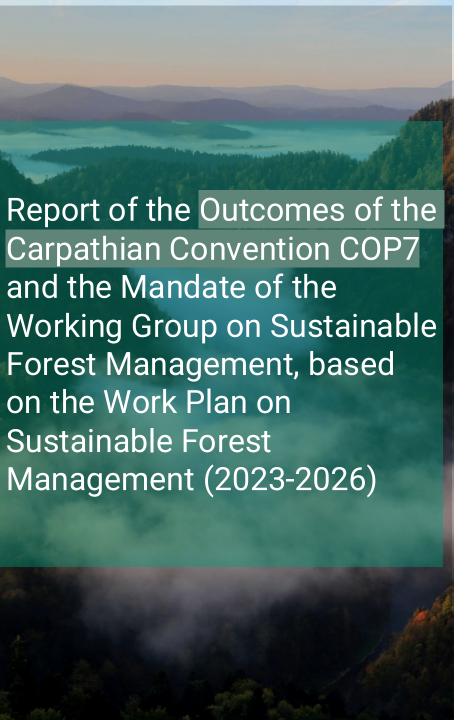




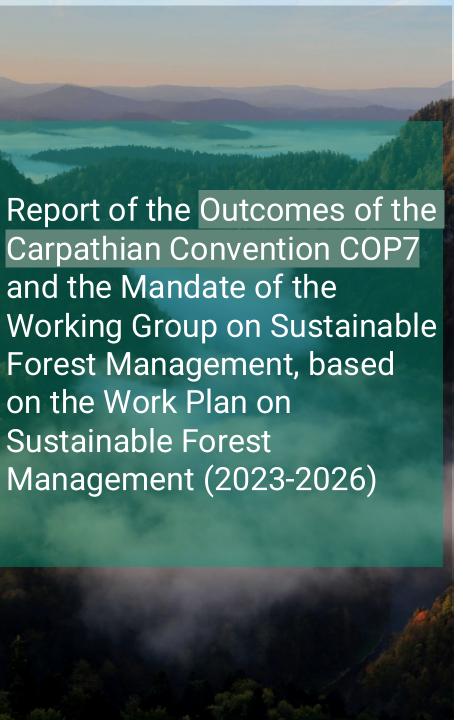


- 4. Welcomes the implementation of Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Forest Management Work Plan 2023 2026 implementing the Forest Protocol and its Strategic Action Plan, and encourages the Parties, WG Forest, relevant stakeholders and the Secretariat to continue the implementation process.
- 5. Welcomes the development of the Assessment of climate change risks and adaptation options for the Carpathian forests and their ecosystem services, appreciates the contributions of the Expert Group consisting of representatives of the Working Group on Climate Change and the Working Group on Sustainable Forest Management, and overall coordination of the Secretariat, to the development process, in this respect encourages the Parties, relevant WGs and stakeholders to consider and act on proposed policy recommendations, taking into account specific conditions of the Parties.
- 6. Further to the DECISION COP7/13 paragraph 4, welcomes the organization of a special session and workshop on forest ecosystem vulnerabilities to climate change in the Carpathians, held during the 6th Forum Carpaticum, on 21 June 2021 in online format, by Mr. William Keeton, University of Vermont and Member of the Science for the Carpathians, and the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, which initiated the development of the above-mentioned Assessment.



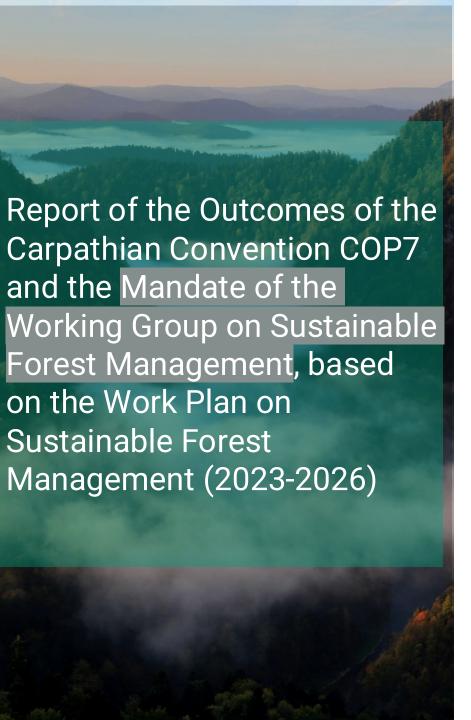


- 7. Takes note of the development of the project proposal ForestConnect "Towards a Climate-smart Forest Connectivity for Large Carnivores in the Balkan-Carpathian Region" (Interreg Danube Region Programme), and encourages the Secretariat and the WG Forest, the WG Biodiversity, WG Climate Change and CNPA to support the development of a Strategic Action Plan with adaptation actions and resilience-enhancing forest management practices for protected areas.
- 8. Welcomes the cooperation established with Forest Europe with regards to the support to Ukraine and the contribution by the Secretariat to the report prepared in regard to the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration: "Supporting the recovery and sustainable management of Ukrainian forests and its forest sector" endorsed by Forest Europe signatories on 30 August 2022, and in this regard encourages the Parties, WG Forest, and the Secretariat to further conduct activities that have a potential to contribute to the recovery and sustainable management of Ukrainian forests and the forest sector.



9. Welcomes the cooperation with FAO on forests related activities and support to Ukraine and encourages the Secretariat to find synergies with FAO in the context of its EU funded project for Ukraine named "Inclusive, Competitive and Sustainable Value Chain Functioning and Development in agriculture, fisheries and forestry (ICSDAFF)", and specifically on the Carpathian project output on "Multipurpose Forest Management Plan (MPFMP), developed and implemented for the local forestry authorities and forestry-based value chains, promoted within the scope of the MPFMP".

10. Commends the documentary film about close-to-nature forest management in the Carpathians produced by the Forest Management Institute of the Czech Republic in cooperation with other partners, which intends to support the implementation of the Forest Protocol in frame of the Carpathian Convention by raising awareness and sharing knowledge on close-to-nature forest management.



Terms of Reference for the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Forest Management

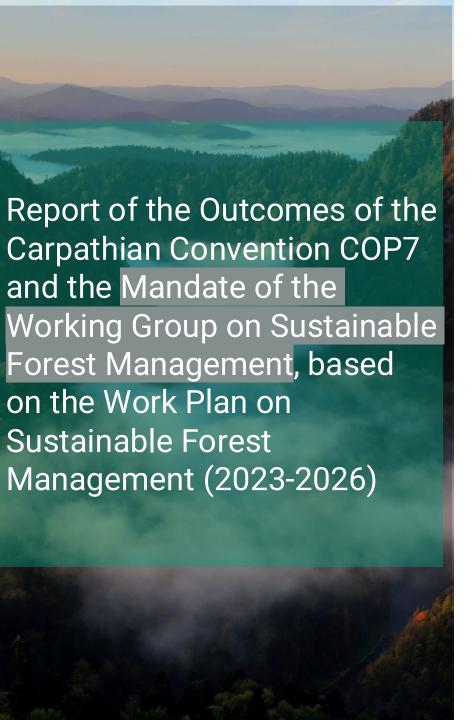
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Strategic objectives

- WG Forest shall aim at supporting the Parties to the Carpathian
 Convention towards their cooperation for the implementation of Article 7
 on sustainable forestry and other related Articles of the Carpathian Convention.
- WG Forest will steer and guide activities of the Carpathian Convention towards implementation of the Forest Protocol and its Strategic Action Plan, relevant COPs Decisions and related Carpathian Convention Programme of Work.
- WG Forest shall cooperate with other working groups of the Carpathian Convention, particularly WG Climate Change, in order to encourage the comprehensive approach for environmental protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians, including through enhancing synergies and facilitating exchange of information.







Terms of Reference for the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Forest Management

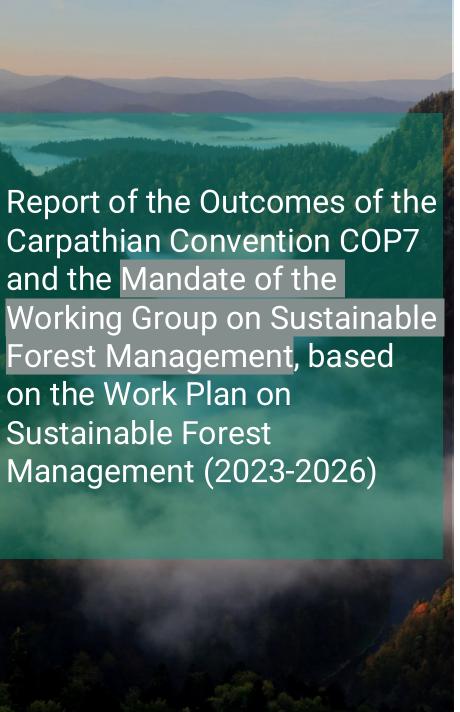
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Responsibilities

- to share relevant information, knowledge and experience in relation to sustainable forest management in their countries with a particular focus on mountain areas;
- to actively contribute to agreed activities and gather information from colleagues, if needed;
- to consult on the activities of WG Forest with their national, regional and local stakeholders (public administration, NGOs, private sector, etc.), share the stakeholders' view with WG Forest when necessary and to ensure the stakeholders involvement in the implementation;
- to undertake tasks as requested by WG Forest respecting agreed timelines;
- to report to the Conference of the Parties through the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee.





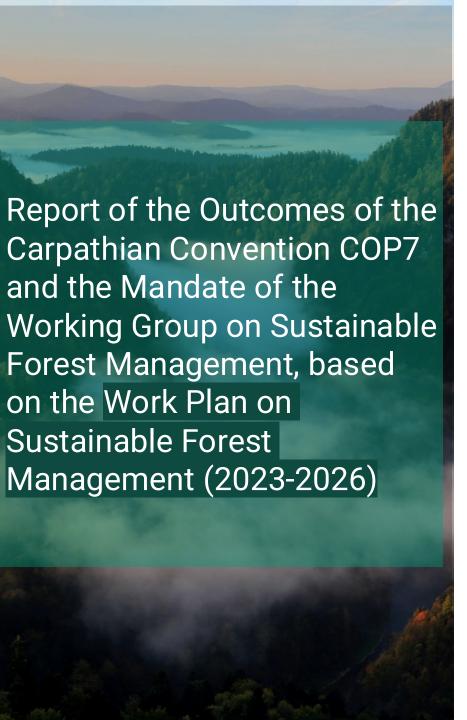


Terms of Reference for the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Forest Management

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Coordination and cooperation with other WGs and stakeholders

- Establish close cooperation and exchange with the other thematic Working Groups of the Carpathian Convention (e.g. through regular meetings of the Chairs of the WGs to be possibly organized back to back with the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee and COP meetings) in order to:
 - ensure regular communication and exchange of strategic information between WGs, which will
 - allow for enhancing synergies, consideration of common activities, providing relevant inputs and avoiding isolated approaches while implementing the activities of the Carpathian Convention;
 - support organization of joint meetings of interested WGs, if relevant;
 - discuss and agree on a timeframe for proposing and implementing activities.
- Collaborate with other regional frameworks/platforms/initiatives and related institutions and organizations, especially from mountain and neighbouring regions, for knowledge exchange and learning.



Work Plan on Sustainable Forest Management (2023-2026). Implementing the Forest Protocol and its Strategic Action Plan

CC/COP7/DOC13

While conducting its activities, the WG Forest shall act according to its

Terms of Reference and follow the strategic objectives established therein.

It will take into account and support implementation of relevant global and EU policies and processes, particularly the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the EU forest strategy for 2030, the European Green Deal, the incoming Nature Restoration Law, and the UN Decade on Ecosystem

Restoration, as well as the goals of achieving sustainably managed forests, halting and reversing land degradation and biodiversity loss of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well the new post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

Reference	Action	Timeframe	Actors	Next steps recommended by the WG Forest
	Continue working on the priority topics: - identification and protection of natural and virgin forests - promotion of close to nature forestry - forestry and climate change in order to implement the respective objectives of the Strategic Action Plan,	By end of 2023	WG Forest, Parties, relevant partners Secretariat	Further strengthen cooperation on the priority topics
UN environ	Continue cooperation and knowledge sharing with the Carpathian Convention and the WG Forest to achieve the implementation of Article 10 of the Forest Protocol with reference to the finalization of the Inventory of Virgin Forests of the Carpathians and its possible extension to other degrees of naturalness, particularly quasi-virgin forests in the Carpathians	By end of 2026	WG Forest, EEA, the European Topic Centre other relevant actors	Collect the missing information from the Parties on the virgin forest identification, - Consider extension of the Inventory of the virgin forests in the Carpathian to other degrees of naturalness, particularly quasi-virgin forests and cooperate on and contribute to the process, - Organize, in consultatation with the WG Forest, physical and online meetings of the WG Forest in order to discuss the related next steps, - Continue the cooperation with the EEA/ECT to finalize the Inventory and extent it to other degrees of naturalness - Harmonize with other process on forest definitions, if possible, - Invite other relevant experts to support the process, - Consider the importance of the primeval forest reserves, which in an adequate size can be essential for the conservation of isolated and small stands of primary and old-growth forests, - Explore information exchange on economic implications including questions on compensation related to the protection of the natural forests and especially virgin forests.

Reference	Action	Timeframe	Actors	Next steps recommended by the WG Forest
	Support the development of the Assessment of the impacts of climate change risks on the Carpathian forests and their ecosystem services, and once completed, consider and act on proposed policy recommendations proposed by the Assessment, taking into account specific conditions of the Parties	By end of 2026	WG Forest, WG Climate Change Secretariat	Assessment draft and related documents - Promote the Assessment and its findings - Consider and act on the policy
	coordinate efforts to address the problem on illegal logging taking into account already existing mechanisms and platforms, as appropriate.	By end of 2023 (potentially 2024-2026 implementati on period)	Parties, WG Forest Secretariat	- Actions to be further considered





Reference	Action	Timefr ame	Actors	Next steps recommended by the WG Forest
	Consider of the Science for the Carpathians (S4C) recommendation of the priority topics for WG Forest work: - Natural disturbance dynamic, including alteration of disturbance regimes and implication for habitat and ecosystem services - Ecological silviculture, including but not limited to close-to-nature forestry - Forest hydrology and relationships to flood regimes and risks - Improving the region's forest road network, design and engineering	By end of 2026	Parties, WG Forest, S4C, other relevant partners, Secretariat	 Discuss and propose projects and initiatives supporting the implementation of the S4C Recommendations Identify possible funding for undertaking relevant actions
	Promote close-to-nature forest management in the Carpathians		WG Forest, Secretariat other relevant partners	- Discuss and propose projects and initiatives relevant to Promote close-to-nature forest management in the Carpathians





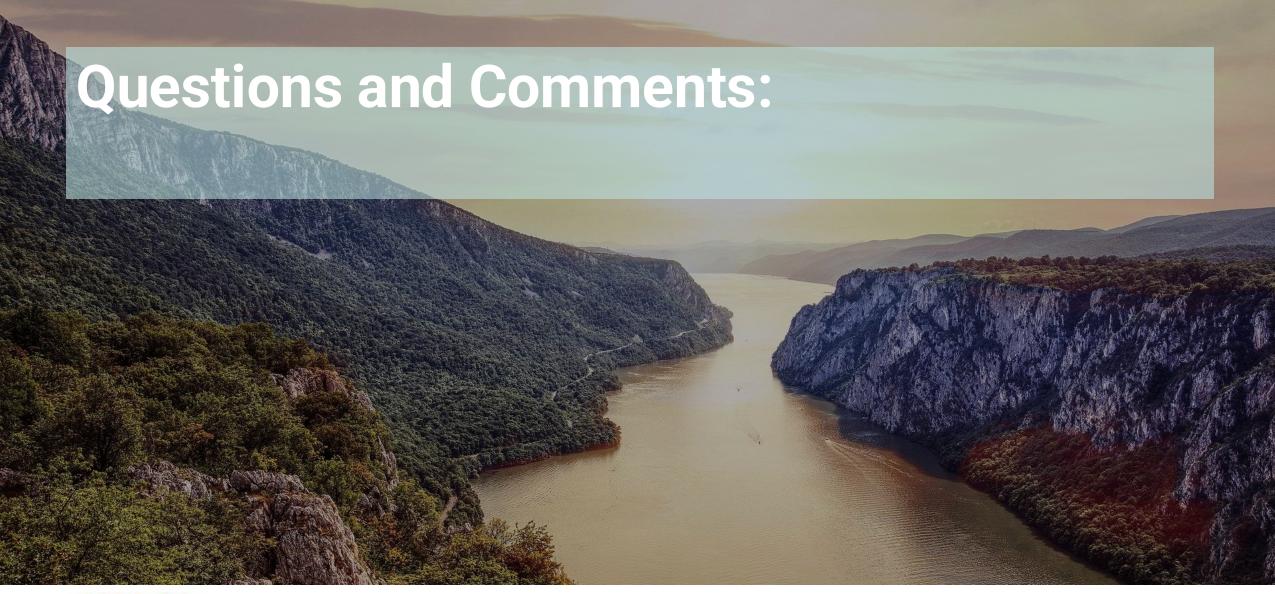


Reference	Action	Timeframe	Actors	Next steps recommended by the WG Forest
	Assess and improve forest connectivity and restoration	By end of 2026	Parties, WG Forest, other relevant partners, Secretariat	- Discuss and propose projects and initiatives relevant to forest connectivity and restoration - Support development of the support the development of a Strategic Action Plan with adaptation actions and resilience-enhancing forest management practices for protected areas of the project ForestConnect "Towards a Climate-smart Forest Connectivity for Large Carnivores in the Balkan-Carpathian Region" (Interreg Danube Region Programme), if the project will be approved - Continue working with the EEA/ETC/DI on assessing forest connectivity and prioritisation for conservation/restoration.



Reference	Action	Timeframe	Actors	Next steps recommended by the WG Forest
	Provide support for Ukraine, particularly on forest related issues	By end of 2026	Parties, WG Forest, other relevant partners, Secretariat	- Actively explore and discuss possibilities for providing support to Ukraine
	Exchange information and technical exchange on forest roads and skid trails	By end of 2026	Parties, WG Forest S4C, other relevant partners, Secretariat	Encourage bilateral and multilateral scientific and technical exchanges on the topic of forest transport infrastructure. The exchanges shall focus on the development of guidelines for forest road and skid trail planning, design, maintenance, and management in the Carpathians. The goal of the exchanges will be to transfer the best available information on the science and engineering of forest transport infrastructure, including economic, ecological, and operational considerations.





























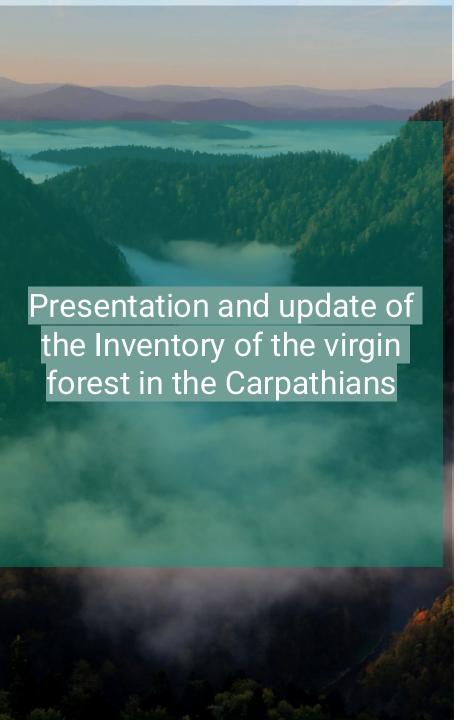


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Water Research Institute. Bratislava, Slovakia 28-29 of April, 2025

Coffee break





Background of the Inventory of the virgin forest in the Carpathians:

The "protocol for sustainable forest management", signed by the Carpathian Convention Parties is formalizes the need to preserve the richness and ensure sustainable use of the Carpathian forests

Article 10 of the Carpathian Convention mandates the identification and protection of natural forests, with a particular emphasis on virgin forests in the Carpathians.

Objective 6.1 of the Strategic Action Plan for the Implementation of the Protocol on Sustainable Forest Management aims to develop an inventory of virgin forests, utilizing a format approved by the Parties within the Carpathian Convention's joint information system.

Presentation and updates of the Inventory of the virgin forest in the Carpathians

Carpathian Convention Secretariat signed a partnership agreement with EEA in July 2012 and included a work plan that is being implemented by one of its European Topic Centres (actually ETC/DI) represented by the University of Malaga (UMA)

Since 2014, EEA and ETC/DI (previously ETC/ULS) have been supporting the Forest WG of the Carpathian Convention in setting the basis to locate, monitor, and prioritize virgin and HNV forest areas:

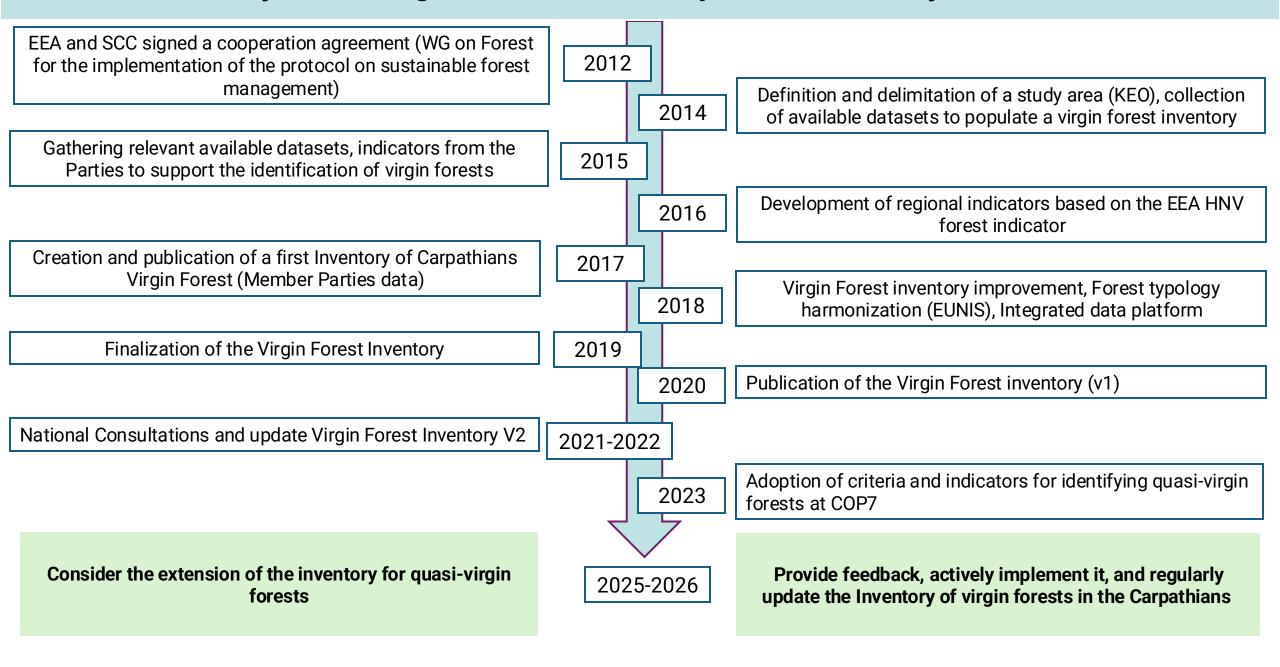
- Support for the virgin forest inventory for better conservation
- Develop an Integrated Data platform to host data
- Developing Carpathian-wide indicators supporting sustainable management efforts

Status quo:

- The Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention remains in contact with EEA
- Inventory stands on 2023 version
- We have received feedback from some NGOs, but it has not been implemented yet



Inventory of the virgin forest in the Carpathians. History and Timeline



Inventory of the virgin forest in the Carpathians

Virgin Forest Inventory of the Carpathians, version draft June 2023

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CRITERIA & INDICATORS FOR SELECTION OF QUASI-VIRGIN FORESTS IN THE CARPATHIANS. CRITERION NATURALNESS

Criteria and indicators for selection of quasi-virgin forests in the Carpathians, to be fulfilled simultaneously

No	Indicators	Defining		
A1.1	Species composition Forests are predominantly formed by native tree species according to potential natural forest types.	Forests are predominantly formed by native tree species according to potential natural forest types.		
A1.2	Human activities, which influenced the development, structure and dynamic of the ecosystem	The absence of silvicultural interventions or logging in the last 75 years. Maximum of 5 stumps with diameters over 15 cm per hectare are allowed.		
		Old forest roads are allowed, but they must be unused by machinery and naturally covered with litter or vegetation.		

CRITERIA & INDICATORS FOR SELECTION OF QUASI-VIRGIN FORESTS IN THE CARPATHIANS. CRITERION NATURALNESS

Criteria and indicators for selection of quasi-virgin forests in the Carpathians, to be fulfilled simultaneously

No	Indicators	Defining
A1.3	Structure	Cyclic ecosystems with complex structures, which include all stages of small development circles (some phases may be present only in small areas) in a mosaic structure (horizontal) and vertically layered, according to the natural type of forest. Range of tree ages proved by biometric characteristic. Occurrence of trees with exceptional dimensions according to the site conditions and species, and signs of physiological decline.
A1.4	Deadwood	Presence of deadwood (lying and standing) at all stages of degradation and all over the forest surface.





CRITERIA & INDICATORS FOR SELECTION OF QUASI-VIRGIN FORESTS IN THE CARPATHIANS. CRITERION: SURFACE & DELIMITATION

Criteria and indicators for selection of quasi-virgin forests in the Carpathians, to be fulfilled simultaneously

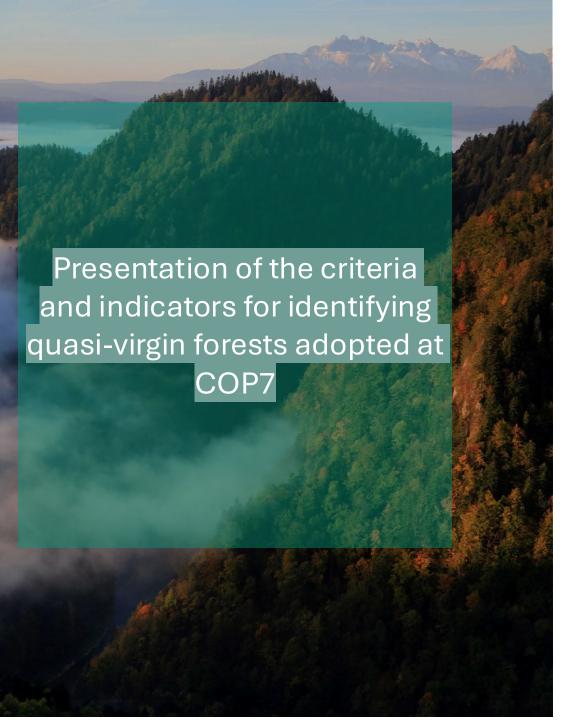
No	Indicators	Defining
A2.1	Area of forest plot stand	Minimum 20 ha.
A2.2	Shape of forest plot stand	Minimum distance between any two opposite boundary points does not decrease below 200 m. This rule does not apply to the remains of relic/rare forests ecosystems or relic tree stands, surrounded by natural stands.

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Human activities which influenced the development, structure and dynamic of the ecosystem:

Quasi-Virgin Forests:

The absence of silvicultural interventions or logging in the last 75 years. Maximum of 5 stumps with diameters over 15 cm per hectare are allowed. Old forest roads are allowed, but they must be unused by machinery and naturally covered with litter or vegetation

Virgin Forests:

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). 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.

Next Steps and Discussion:

- It is necessary for countries to initiate the process of identifying new forests in accordance with the updated criteria to continue with the process of enlargement the Inventory of virgin forest in Carpathians, which are based on the definition outlined in the Forest Protocol.
- Define the process for collection of data for quasi-virgin forests
- Additional support by the Presidency of WG Forests and the WG Forests partners

























