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#### NOTE

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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Council
Subject:	The importance of working in close cooperation with the Member States when preparing the EU framework for forest monitoring and strategic plans <i>- Information from the Austrian and Finnish delegation on behalf of the Austrian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Cypriot, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovakian, Slovenian and Swedish delegation</i>

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Delegations will find attached an information note from the Austrian and Finnish delegation on behalf of the Austrian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Cypriot, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovakian, Slovenian and Swedish delegations on the above subject. This topic will be dealt with under "AOB" at the Council session (Agriculture and Fisheries) on 17 and 18 October 2022.

## **The importance of working in close cooperation with the Member States when preparing the EU framework for forest monitoring and strategic plans**

**Information from the Austrian and Finnish delegation on behalf of the Austrian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Cypriot, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovakian, Slovenian and Swedish delegations**

### **Setting the scene**

Improving the information we have on the forests in the EU is more important than ever. We need solid data and information to follow progress in meeting various EU forest-related targets, as introduced under the European Green Deal policy instruments. Connections and coherence of the different EU strategies, related to use and protection of forests, need to be recognised. Harmonised and reliable data and information can result in better forest-related policies and initiatives. If carried out in the right way, the preparatory process towards establishing the new EU framework for forest monitoring and strategic plans can pave way to a Commission proposal that forms a good basis for discussions.

### **The work of the sub-group under Standing Forestry Committee**

The Commission is establishing a sub-group under Standing Forestry Committee to help prepare the forthcoming legislation. This has potential to be a good initiative, creating a forum for Member States and the Commission to engage in frank, fair and transparent discussions on how the future EU forest monitoring framework should be built. As Member States have the competence on forest policy, close and honest cooperation is essential to build the trust needed to take the framework further. As stated throughout the development and implementation of the EU Forest Strategy 2030, Member States are keen to work together with the Commission on forest-related issues and expect the same commitment from the Commission.

## **Collecting of forest data and information**

The collection of up-to-date forest data and information has been developed in EU Member States over decades, and in some countries for up to 100 years. Data collection is very costly and needs to be tailored to national circumstances. Existing national forest inventories (NFIs) have a key role in data collection, processing, interpretation and reporting. Different types of monitoring tasks need different approaches – long-term monitoring of (multiple) forest resources requires statistically sound inventory comparable over time while real-time monitoring of forest damages benefits from remote sensing with short repetition intervals.

A lot of progress has been achieved in harmonisation of forest data and information across Europe during the last 15 years, and this good work can be taken further. The European National Forest Inventories Network can play a key role in this.

## **Where from here?**

It would be important to identify exactly which policies require harmonised forest information at EU level and what are the exact parameters to look into. Equally important is to understand what is needed to produce that information.

The undersigned Member States strongly support Presidency's intention to take forest issues to the agenda of the November Council meeting. As a multitude of forest-related initiatives are either already under discussion or in the pipeline, it is important for the Agriculture and Fisheries Council to be actively exchanging views on these.

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