

Work Programme 2025–2026

Liaison Unit Sweden





**“The success of the Work
Programme 2025–2026 relies
highly on the active engagement
and contributions of all
stakeholders.”**

Dissemination level (RE - Restricted to a group specified by the Liaison Unit Sweden)
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Executive Summary

Forest Europe is the voluntary high-level political process for dialogue, cross-sectoral cooperation and transboundary cooperation on forests and forestry in Europe. Its objectives are to strengthen Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) across the pan-European region and to provide appropriate responses to current forest policy challenges for its Signatories as well as allowing flexibility regarding new emerging issues. Overarching challenges may include, e.g., climate change, mitigation and adaption, biodiversity protection and promoting a sustainable and circular bioeconomy.

At the 9th Ministerial Conference, held in Bonn in October 2024, Ministers responsible for forests in Europe signed the Bonn Ministerial Declaration *“Keeping Sustainable Forest Management Fit for the Future”*, and the Bonn Ministerial Resolution *“Sustainable Forest Management as a Tool to Enhance Forest Resilience”*. Both Ministerial Documents serve as the foundation for the Work Programme 2025–2026.

THE FIRST ENDEAVOUR will be the further development of the dynamic concept of SFM, its criteria and indicators (C&I), and its potential to act as a balancing tool to continuously moderate the diverse demands on forests and forest resources in the future. During the Work Programme 2025–2026, the report State of Europe's Forests (SoEF), will be published. This Work Programme will establish a foundation for constructive dialogue on its findings.

THE SECOND ENDEAVOUR will be to implement the current working modalities to make the Forest Europe process even more fit for the future. This includes finding and providing greater accessibility and broader opportunities to engage in a more flexible way, thus keeping, and even enhancing the ownership of all Signatories and Observers in the process.

THE THIRD ENDEAVOUR will be, subject to current priorities and available resources, to follow up on previously created and developed projects or to discuss and promptly react to potential emerging topics. The aim is to enable greater accessibility and broader opportunities for the Signatories and Observers to be engaged in the process in a more flexible way, while ensuring the capabilities to promptly react to emerging issues.

THE ROLE OF PARTNERING, cooperation and finding synergies are the keys in the Forest Europe process and in the Work Programme 2025–2026. Through this Work Programme, Forest Europe will continue to contribute to global forest policy agendas, to strengthen the science-policy dialogue and support the achievement the Sustainable Development Goals by equally addressing the environmental, social, and economic dimensions of sustainability.

The success of Forest Europe depends on a robust foundation that can be adapted to the changing needs of the future. Let us strengthen this foundation together.

Introduction

Forest Europe, the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, was founded on 18 December 1990. It is a high-level voluntary political process that involves Ministers responsible for forests from 44 countries and the European Union, along with, at present, Observers from 14 additional countries and 48 organisations.

The objectives of this process are to strengthen Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) in the pan-European region and to find suitable responses to current forest policy challenges. It builds upon Forest Europe's definition of SFM and employs criteria and indicators as the data foundation for its flagship report State of Europe's Forests (SoEF).

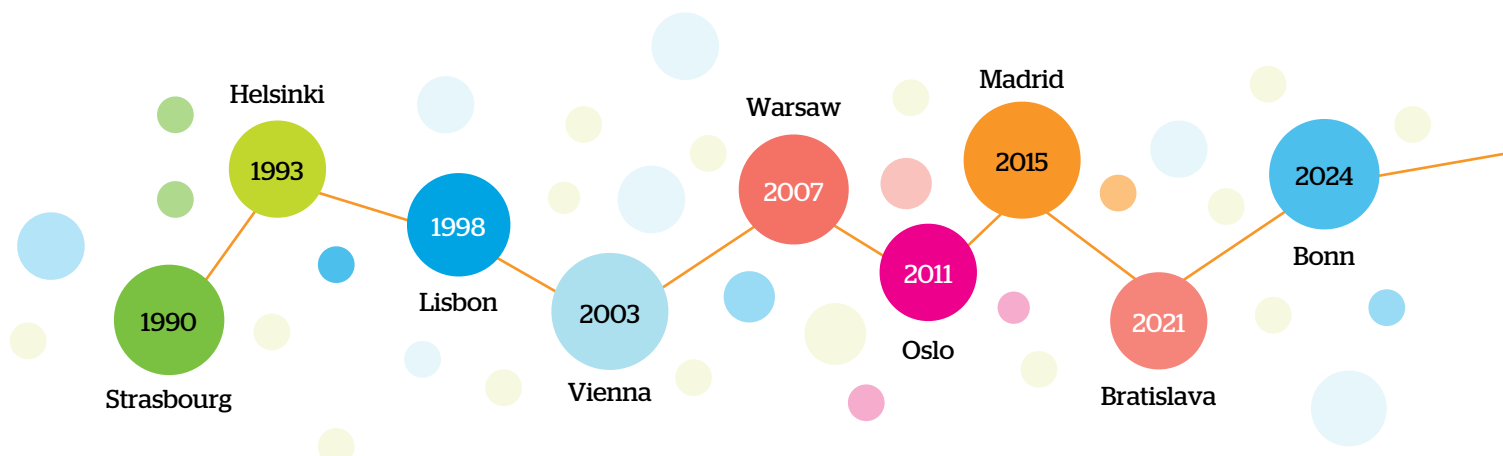
As part of the process, Signatories make decisions of the highest political relevance regarding forests, forest management, and socio-political topics, aiming to safeguard the ecological, social, and economic benefits of European forests. Over its 35 years of

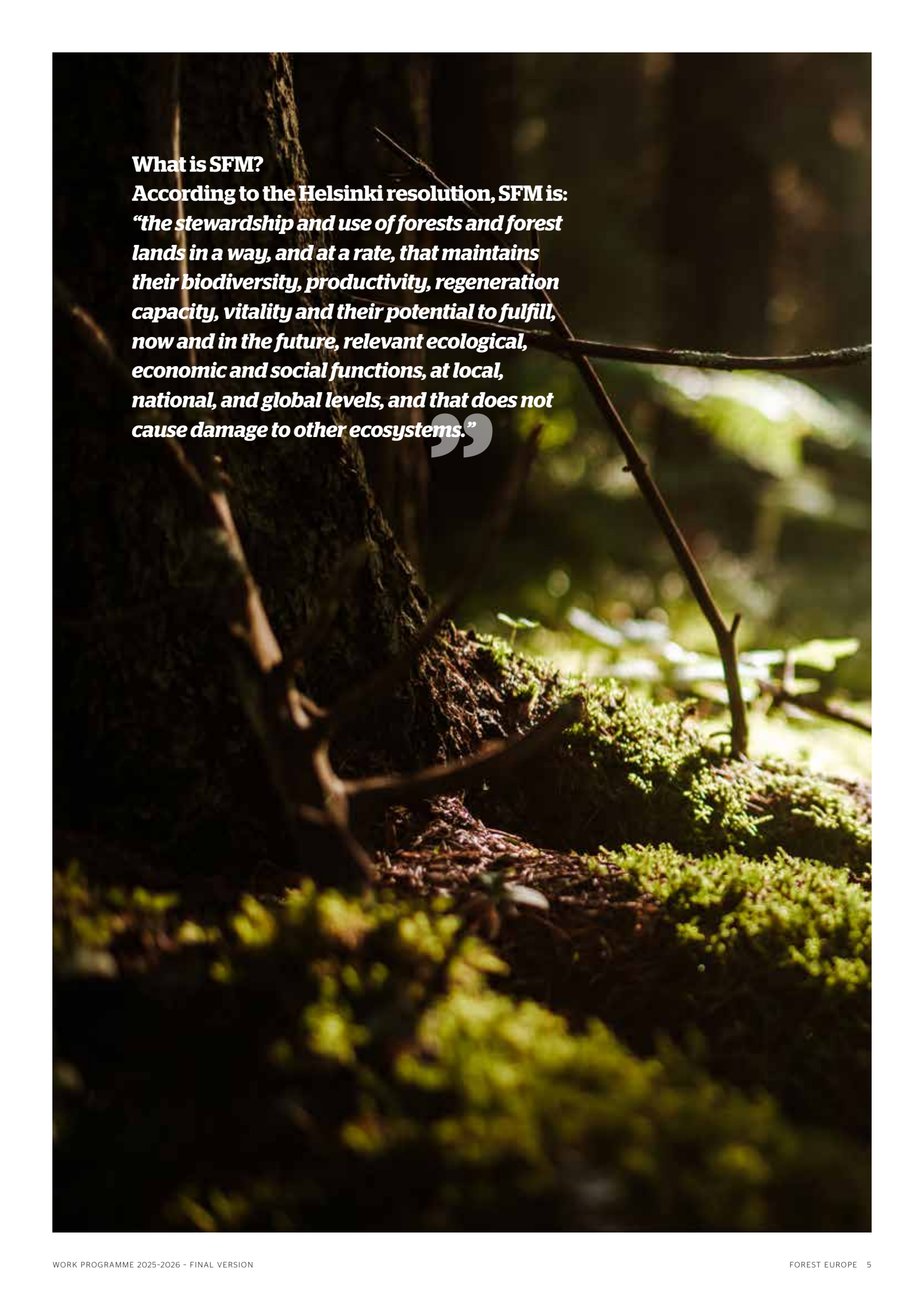
existence, the Forest Europe process has generated and collected substantial knowledge. This wealth of information forms the basis for knowledge transfer and serves as a platform for policy dialogue within the pan-European region.

At the 9th Ministerial Conference, held in Bonn on 1–2nd October 2024, Ministers responsible for forests in Europe signed the Bonn Ministerial Declaration, *"Keeping Sustainable Forest Management Fit for the Future"*, and the Bonn Ministerial Resolution, *"Sustainable Forest Management as a Tool to Enhance Forest Resilience"*. Both Ministerial Documents form the basis of the Work Programme 2025–2026.

In January 2025, the newly established Liaison Unit Sweden (LUS) assumed the role of Secretariat of Forest Europe from the Liaison Unit Bonn. The LUS will be managed by the Swedish Forest Agency and is designed as a dynamic and virtual unit that draws on talent from across Sweden. The Work Programme 2025–2026 was elaborated by LUS under the guidance of the General Coordinating Committee (GCC) and was adopted by Forest Europe's Expert Level Meeting (ELM) in April 2025. During the Work Programme 2025–2026 the GCC consists, at present, of representatives from Albania, Germany, UK and Sweden.

THE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCES 1990–2024



A close-up photograph of a forest floor. A tree trunk is on the left, and a mossy log is in the foreground. Sunlight filters through the trees, creating a dappled light effect. The text is overlaid on the upper left portion of the image.

What is SFM?

According to the Helsinki resolution, SFM is:

“the stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way, and at a rate, that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfill, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions, at local, national, and global levels, and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems.”

Objectives and main principles

In line with the Bonn Ministerial Declaration and building on the long-term vision for Forest Europe, the implementation of the Work Programme 2025-2026 reflects overarching political priorities on, among other things, climate change, mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity protection, promoting a sustainable and circular bioeconomy and allowing flexibility regarding new and emerging issues.

The Work Programme 2025–2026 has a more stringent focus to deliver on the top priorities of the Bonn Ministerial Declaration. This is partly due to limited resources and partly because the Swedish chairmanship will last for a shorter period – two years instead of the until now usual four to five.

Two workstreams have been defined in the Work Programme 2025–2026 for this purpose, *A dynamic concept of Sustainable Forest Management in Europe* and *Keeping Forest Europe Fit for the Future*. Additionally, attention will also be directed towards several areas of continued and emerging interest. The success of the Work Programme 2025–2026 relies heavily on the active engagement and contributions of all stakeholders.

Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) is essential to maintaining the ecological, economic, and socio-cultural functions of forests. Thus, further promoting SFM in the pan-European region is the starting point of the Forest Europe Work Programme 2025–2026. The continued work on the dynamic concept of SFM, its criteria and indicators (C&I), and its potential to serve as a balancing tool to continuously moderate the various claims on forests and forest resources in the future, will remain the top priorities within the Work

Programme 2025–2026. That, alongside other high level political commitments adopted at the nine Ministerial Conferences held to date, will thus serve as the basis of future work.

During the Swedish chairmanship, the joint publication of the flagship report *State of Europe's Forests (SoEF)* with UNECE and FAO will take place through innovative presentation and communication efforts. LUS aims to continuously add to the strengthening and broadening of knowledge and interest for the criteria and indicators and how they can contribute to SFM. This is an integral part of the long term mission of Forest Europe, where the launch of the report is a central milestone.

To ensure continuity, maintaining the stability and fitness for the future of Forest Europe as a high-level voluntary pan-European forest policy process, is another prioritized area in this Work Programme. The overall principle of the process – to generate political added value by its inclusiveness, consensus building ability and flexibility – will be intensified. By staying relevant to our Signatories and Observers through cooperation and exchange of experience, Forest Europe strengthens our collective impact. Development of working modalities will continue,

with the purpose to provide greater accessibility and broader opportunities for Signatories and Observers to be engaged in a more flexible way in the process, specifically regarding emerging issues of political relevance.

Since its establishment in 1990, Forest Europe has initiated and developed various projects and concepts, many of which have found a home with entities outside Forest Europe. Examples of such initiatives include ForISK and EUFORGEN. These initiatives remain of great interest to our Signatories and Observers and will continue to be monitored and communicated within Forest Europe. There are also highly interesting and significant areas of continued interest, which will not have dedicated workstreams in the Work Programme 2025–2026. One such example is Green jobs in a competitive bioeconomy and forest education. While not having dedicated workstreams, these areas will continue to receive focus and attention in this Work Programme. The Work Programme 2025–2026 also enables greater flexibility to enable the process to promptly react to emerging issues. The success of work with these areas relies heavily on a strong bottom-up perspective and active support from Signatories and Observers.



“Forest Europe will continue to contribute to global forest policy agendas, strengthen the science-policy dialogue and support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.”

The expected outputs, or proposals, will be presented to, discussed and decided upon by the Expert Level Meeting (ELM) and presented to, for adoption, at the 2026 Ministerial Conference.

Forest Europe has a responsibility to, among others, communicate decisions and outcomes from the Ministerial Conferences that impact society and citizens across Europe. The Liaison Unit Sweden (LUS) will use relevant communication methods to raise awareness and foster dialogue about Forest Europe's work and results.

The objective of these communication efforts is to contribute to achieving Forest Europe's goals and to ensure the visibility of our work and its effects through effective engagement with relevant stakeholders. The aim is to encourage European decision-makers to further participate in the political

dialogue and collaborate in forest policy development. Communication goals, strategies, target audiences, messages, and channels will be outlined in the communication strategy, which will be complemented by communication plans and relevant follow-up activities.

New initiatives and activities proposed by participants are strongly encouraged. The Work Programme 2025–2026 is designed to be transparent, flexible and capable of incorporating innovative ideas. Its success relies on the engagement and contributions of all stakeholders, including both dedicated efforts and in-kind contributions. Information on financial donations, and the in-kind contributions made by partners to the Forest Europe process, will be made available to the Expert Level Meeting (ELM).

The role of partnering, cooperation and finding synergies are central to

the Forest Europe process. It is crucial to implement the Work Programme 2025–2026 in cooperation with Signatories, Observers, and other relevant organizations and stakeholders. Forest Europe is also open in this respect to new partners across the sector and outside of the geographic region.

Forest Europe will continue to contribute to global forest policy agendas, strengthen the science-policy dialogue and to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by equally addressing the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainability. Engaging international organizations in Forest Europe activities and events, cooperating with them, and representing Forest Europe at relevant international fora, will enhance such an exchange of knowledge and practices, within the mandate provided by the Ministers.

WORKSTREAM1

A dynamic concept of Sustainable Forest Management in Europe

Forest Europe leads the way in defining Sustainable Forest Management (SFM). The pan-European concept of SFM has provided a common approach for dialogue, monitoring, and policymaking across Europe. It is a dynamic and evolving concept, that continuously moderates the various claims on forests and forest resources balancing the three pillars of sustainability—ecological, social, and economic.

The voluntary reporting assumes that the criteria and indicators (C&I) are firmly rooted among the Signatories and grounded in robust scientific principles. This provides a solid foundation for the results to be used to generate real impact. Since the adoption of the C&Is for SFM in Lisbon in 1998, they have served as a common framework for forest monitoring and reporting in Europe. Over the years, the C&I have undergone several adaptations, including collaborations with other regional processes and in the global context.

In the recent years, forest policy and management have faced emerging challenges, both from a changing environment and shifting political framework conditions. Societal demands on forests are increasing and the social, political, economic, and environmental contexts in which forest management is operated is continuously changing. Balancing the different claims on forests and forest ecosystem services is a complex task that requires proper handling of trade-offs in forest land use, management, and forest value chains.

During the previous chairmanship, the concept of SFM has again been thoroughly reviewed; it remains relevant, and it provides a robust foundation that can be adapted to the changing needs of the future.

The aim of this workstream is to ensure that Forest Europe continues to advance SFM and keeps its C&Is at the forefront of forest policymaking and management. This workstream will continue to promote and implement the dynamic concept of SFM as the integrative basis for forest strategies, plans, and programs in political dialogues and in response to emerging issues and societal demands on European forests. The focus will be to build on previous efforts to review and strengthen the C&I for SFM in the pan-European region, while taking into account the most recent international commitments, such as the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Convention on Climate Change, the KUNMING – Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and the continuously changing social, political, economic and

environmental context in which forest management is practised as well as the increasing societal demands on forests.

During the Work Programme 2025–2026, the Forest Europe flagship report, State of Europe's Forests (SoEF), will be published. The report is an essential element of pan-European forest reporting. This workstream will establish a foundation for constructive dialogue on the findings of the report.

The Bonn Ministerial Declaration, *"Keeping Sustainable Forest Management Fit for the Future"*, provides a clear reference and commitment to the dynamic concept of SFM. Ministers have reaffirmed their commitment to the continued work on the dynamic concept of SFM, its Criteria and Indicators (C&I) and the joint publication of the flagship report State of Europe's Forests (SoEF), in collaboration with UNECE and FAO, remain the key priorities of the Work Programme 2025–2026.

The continuation of the SFM Think Tank is essential for the success of this work.



“The aim of this workstream is to ensure that Forest Europe continues to advance SFM and keeps its C&Is at the forefront of forest policymaking and management.”

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

- 1) A working group, open to Signatories and Observers and complemented by external experts, working closely with the SFM Think Tank, will be established.
- 2) A review of C&I for decision-making on SFM will be initiated, with the analysis and recommendations summarized in a report.
- 3) The report State of Europe's Forests will be communicated and discussed in an open and inclusive manner.

The expected outputs will be presented at high level meetings, further strengthening the concept of SFM and contributing to the political dialogue on forests at European, EU, and global levels.

WORKSTREAM 2

Keeping Forest Europe Fit for the Future

Forest Europe is a platform for policy dialogue. By staying relevant to the Signatories and Observers of Forest Europe, the collective impact will be strengthened, not least in relation to recent international commitments and the continuously changing social, political, economic, and environmental context.

Long-term financial and political commitments can be challenging for signatories. Therefore, GCC membership will no longer be linked to financial obligations. Starting in 2025, the lead country will bear the costs, supplemented by voluntary contributions from signatories.

The aim of the workstream is to ensure the stability of Forest Europe as a high-level, voluntary pan-European forest policy process. The workstream will start discussions on possible solutions that give Forest Europe financial and political stability in 2027 and onwards. A working group will be established and asked to provide proposals on how to achieve stability and how to ensure that the process provides greater accessibility and broader opportunities to be engaged in more flexible ways, thus keeping – and even enhancing – the ownership of all Signatories and Observers in the process.

In the Bonn Ministerial Declaration 2024, Ministers committed themselves *“to further develop the Forest Europe process as a platform to connect the increasing number of forest-related sectors and actors, including through new formats for action, such as High-level Policy Dialogues, and to support inter-sectoral dialogue in order to avoid fragmentation of forest policy”*.

In conjunction with that decision, new working modalities for Forest Europe were established to ensure the process remains fit for the future. This involves finding more flexible ways to collaborate and ensuring the continued voluntary and active engagement of all Signatories and Observers in both the political and technical steering work, as well as co-financing the process to ensure sufficient ownership of the process.

The new working modalities contain several changes and open up opportunities for innovations and future pathways.

However, for such changes to take effect – and to ensure Forest Europe remains fit for the future – the issue of long-term financial and political stability must be addressed. As Sweden's role as lead country for Forest Europe ends on 31 December 2026, a solution must be found for 2027 and onwards.

A photograph of a person with reddish hair, seen from behind, walking away on a dirt path through a lush green forest. The path is flanked by tall grass and wildflowers. Large, moss-covered tree trunks line the path, and the canopy above is dense with green leaves. The lighting is soft and natural.

“The aim of the workstream is to ensure the stability of Forest Europe as a high-level, voluntary pan-European forest policy process.”

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

- 1) A working group will be established.
- 2) An analysis (eg., SWOT) will be conducted of different pathways to reach possible solutions regarding financial and political stability in 2027 and onwards.
- 3) A report will be published containing options and proposals for creating political and financial stability for Forest Europe post-2026.

Areas of continued and emerging interest

At the nine Ministerial Conferences held to date, several high-level political commitments have been adopted and will remain as the basis for future work by Forest Europe. Over the years, Forest Europe has created and developed various projects and concepts that continue to deserve significant attention and emphasis.

A few of these projects and concepts have found a home with entities outside Forest Europe but remain of great interest to our Signatories and Observers and will continue to be communicated within Forest Europe. It is also crucial that Forest Europe reflects overarching current political priorities and responds to emerging issues of policy interest. Thus, it is important that there is enough flexibility and space to discuss emerging topics of high relevance for international forest policy. Informal ministerial gatherings (High-level Policy Dialogues – HLPD) could offer an additional platform to discuss emerging topics.

The aim of the work within these areas of continued and emerging interest is to enable greater accessibility and broader opportunities for the Signatories and Observers to engage in the process in a more flexible way, and to enable the process to promptly react to emerging issues. Areas of work will be prioritized by LUS under the guidance of the GCC, if and when Signatories and Observers express additional interest in them and there are sufficient available resources for implementation.

These areas of continued and emerging interest contribute to further increasing Forest Europe Signatories' commitment to develop common

strategies to strengthen Sustainable Forest Management in the pan-European region and to find suitable responses to current forest policy challenges. The success of this work relies heavily on a strong bottom-up perspective combined with the active support of Signatories and Observers. Work in these areas can be undertaken, if and when Signatories or Observers express additional interest in them, or if certain conditions change. New initiatives and activities proposed by participants are strongly encouraged. Thus, for these areas of continued and emerging interest, potential outputs will be defined gradually based on the interest shown and available resources.

POTENTIAL OUTPUTS

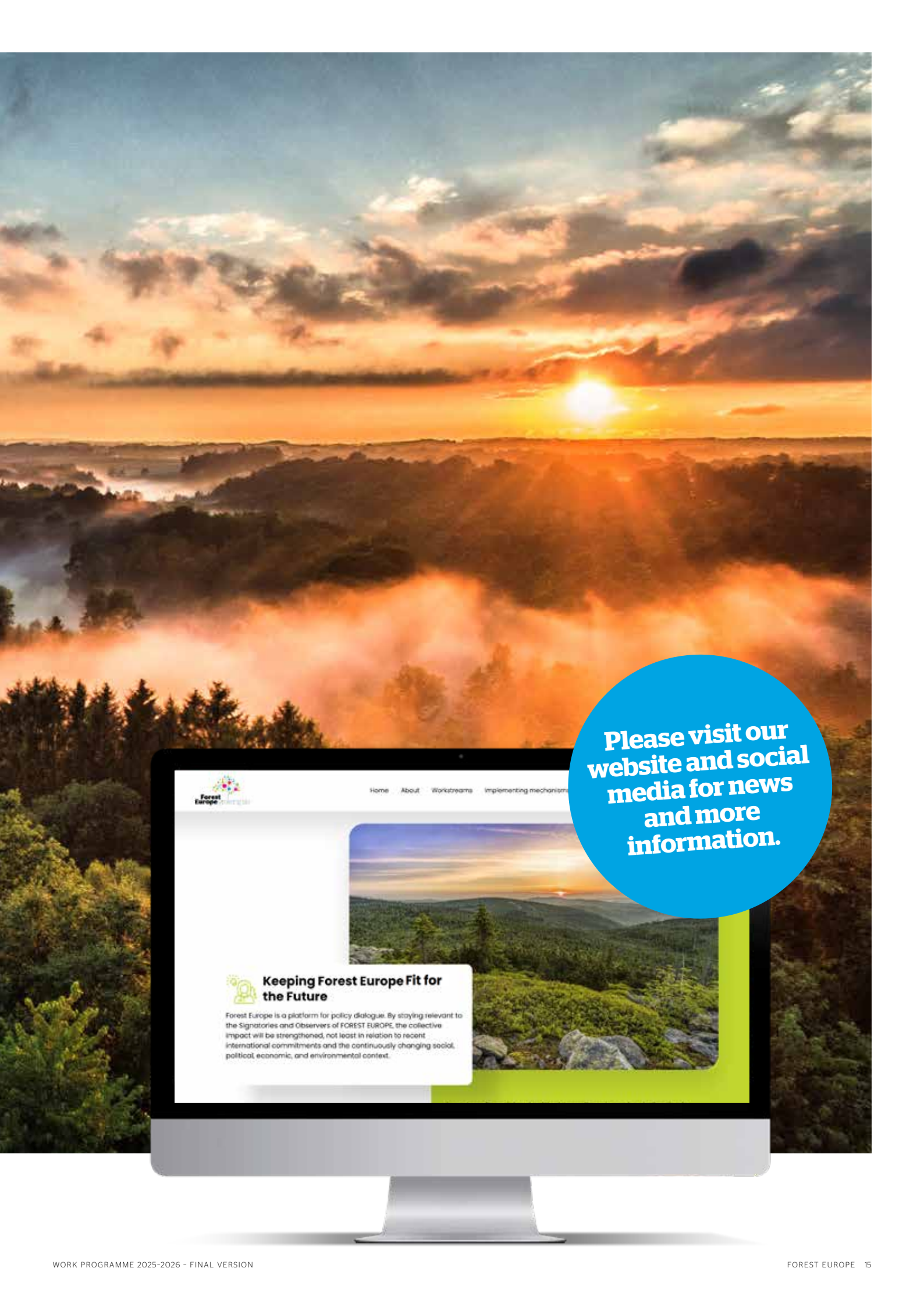
- 1) On behalf of the Signatories, monitor and support
 - a) FoRISK
 - b) EUFORGEN
- 2) Support the expert group on Green Forest Jobs
 - a) Review the Forest Europe set of C&Is dedicated to Green Forest Jobs.
 - b) Promote decent and attractive forest jobs, both traditional and novel, to raise interest in working in the forest sector towards a sustainable and circular bioeconomy.
- 3) Support forest education
 - a) Include IFSA representatives in Forest Europe activities
 - b) Support the SILVA network
- 4) Support to Ukraine in rebuilding its forest sector along with the necessary reforms after the war-related breakdown, to conserve, restore, and sustainably manage its forests.
- 5) Acknowledge that the rapidly ongoing digitalization of forests can contribute to new insights and better decisions for sustainable forest planning.
- 6) Address other potential and emerging challenges and opportunities.

“Over the years, Forest Europe has created and developed various projects and concepts that continue to deserve significant attention and emphasis.”



A wide-angle aerial photograph of a dense forest at sunset. The sky is filled with large, dark clouds that are illuminated from below by the setting sun, creating a warm orange and yellow glow. A thick layer of white mist or fog rises from the forest floor, partially obscuring the trees in the middle ground. The foreground shows the tops of many green trees, some of which are also shrouded in mist. In the far distance, a city skyline is visible under the twilight sky.

**“The Liaison Unit Sweden (LUS)
will use relevant communication
methods to raise awareness and
foster dialogue about Forest
Europe’s work and results.”**



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and more
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Keeping Forest Europe Fit for the Future

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