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FECOF - Statement

The role of municipal forest ownership amidst a new EU Forest Strategy

Forests are multifarious, not just on the global scale, but also within the European Union. Comparably, forest ownership structures and relating thereto forest management goals are highly versatile.

In contrast to other ownership types, the respective relevance of those objectives at municipal forests results from the recurring local democratic decision-making processes, encouraging the people's sense of responsibility for their local forests. In this context, municipal forest ownership fulfils its obligations towards society and the nature on a unique and highly multifunctional way in adaption to the specific local conditions and needs. Unfortunately, this specificity has not been taken into account on the European level so far.

In order to sustain the diversity of forests, forest management and its ecological, economic and social benefits, a purposive forest policy has to enhance the local framework of sustainable forest management actions as opposed to restricting it. Therefore, the European Municipal forest owners endorse the wide-ranging principles of the current EU Forest Strategy, working towards further strengthening of sustainable and multifunctional forest management at all levels.

Regarding the severe damage forest eco systems are presently suffering all over Europe, it is now more than ever of vital importance, to aid the European forest owners in the challenges they are facing, such as climate change mitigation and adaption. Thus, to achieve the objectives of the forest related European policy, besides better policy consistency and coherence in general, a new EU Forest Strategy continuously has to ensure, that, despite the case of small-scaled ownership structures, essential support reaches the responsible forest owners on a local level in order to implement the necessary measures.

Considering both, scope of action and effective support, we feel confident that together with the responsible member states, the EU and its Forest Strategy will make an essential contribution towards a sustainable development of forests, the forest-based sector and society, in the EU as well as on a global level. According to the fundamental principles of the European forestry policy for municipalities, the communal forest owners are willing to support these goals as best they can.

FECOF – European Federation of Municipal Forest Owners

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