

Introduction

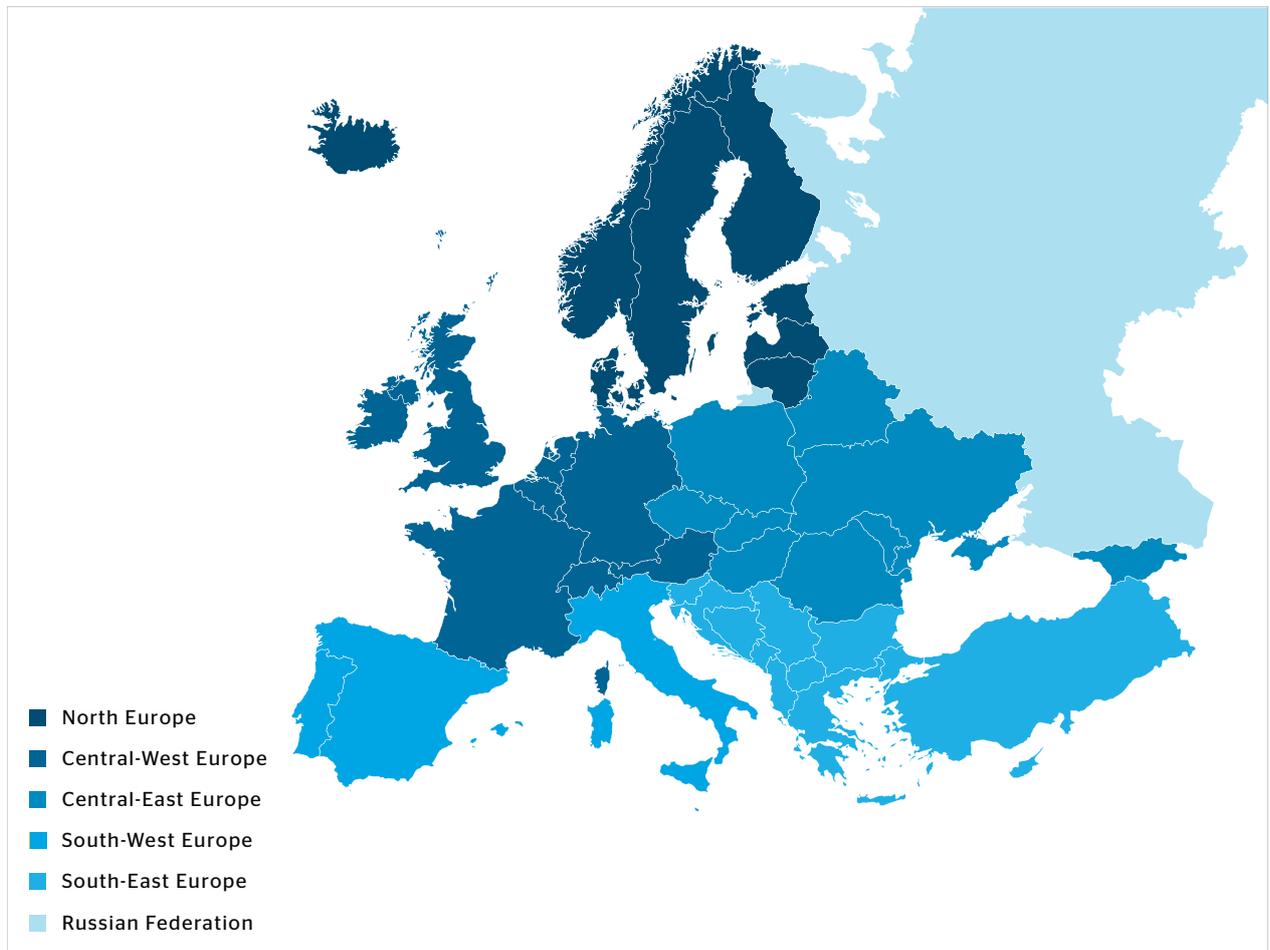


Figure A: Forest Europe Country Groups

The Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forests in Europe, known as FOREST EUROPE, has been presenting the “State of Europe’s Forests Report” to Ministerial Conferences since 2003. This 4th edition of the report is presented to the 7th Ministerial Conference.

FOREST EUROPE is a European high-level policy process for dialogue and cooperation on forest policies. The process focuses on the need to assess the state of forests and the progress made towards Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) at regional level. One of the main achievements of the FOREST EUROPE process is the development of a pan-European set of Criteria and Indicators.

The pan-European set of Criteria and Indicators, which was developed as a policy instrument for monitoring, evaluating and reporting the progress made in implementing sustainable forest management, is one of the main tools available for monitoring sustainable forest management at national and regional levels.

The report “State of Europe’s Forests 2015” aims to provide policy makers and stakeholders with comprehensive up-to-date information on the status and trends in forest and sustainable forest management and to provide a solid basis for future political commitments on forests and other forest-related issues.

The “State of Europe’s Forests 2015” report has been coordinated and compiled by FOREST EUROPE’s Liaison Unit Madrid in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the European Forest Institute (EFI), the European Commission Joint Research Centre in Ispra and the University of Hamburg (UHH).

The FOREST EUROPE countries decided at the Expert Level Meeting held in February 2012 in Madrid that the current edition of the State of Europe’s Forests would be based on the experience gained from previous reports, in particular the 2011 report. Accordingly, and in order to highlight regional differences, the countries were grouped in six country groups.

The report covers the 46 FOREST EUROPE signatory countries and the European Union. The information used in the compilation of the report was supplied by the governments and by several international data providers, namely the International Co-operative Programme on Assessment and Monitoring of Air Pollution effects on Forests (ICP-Forests), the European Commission Joint Research Centre, Bioversity International, EUROSTAT (the Statistical Office of the European Union), FAO, and the UNECE Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire and Joint Wood Energy Enquiry.

For the first time, the 2015 edition of the "State of Europe's Forests" was produced simultaneous to the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA 2015). As agreed during the Expert Level Meeting held in February 2012 in Madrid, the possibility of joint data collection with FAO's FRA 2015 was explored with a view to enhancing the quality and harmonization of data collection and reporting. The result of this process was the Collaborative Forest Resources Questionnaire (CFRQ), which was led by FAO and established through six international regional processes. The CFRQ is included in the "Forest Data Reporting Package for 2015", which is distributed by FAO. The information relating to seven FOREST EUROPE Quantitative Indicators was collected through this CFRQ.

The information on the pan-European Quantitative Indicators was collected using the Joint FOREST EUROPE/UNECE/FAO Questionnaire on Pan-European Quantitative Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management. Information relating to 21 Quantitative Indicators was collected using this questionnaire, which has been improved with a view to facilitating the work of the National Correspondents. This process was led by the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section. The data on the remaining 7 Quantitative Indicators were obtained directly from the international data providers.

The UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section provided the Liaison Unit Madrid with technical support through the collection, processing and reviewing of the data from Quantitative Indicators used in the compilation of this report.

The information on pan-European Qualitative Indicators was collected using the "Questionnaire on pan-European Qualitative Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management". The Liaison Unit Madrid developed and improved the questionnaire in close collaboration with FAO and the EFI in accordance with the recommendations and suggestions made by the Advisory Group on the elaboration of the "State of Europe's Forests" report and based on the lessons learnt from previous experience.

The "State of Europe's Forests 2015" report is divided into two parts. The first part (Overall Policies,

Institutions and Instruments for Sustainable Forest Management) provides general information about the way in which forests are governed in the countries through policies, institutions and instruments for SFM. These aspects are covered by 5 Qualitative Indicators and the changes reported on these indicators over time reveal how policymakers are responding to the challenges and opportunities associated with forests and SFM. The second part of the report (European Forests: Status, Trends and Policy responses) was compiled in accordance with the Advisory Group's recommendations and provides the information relating to the 35 Quantitative Indicators, which provide information on the current status and changes in European forests and the progress achieved in SFM, and to the 12 Qualitative Indicators which provide information about the policies, institutions and instruments used to address specific Policy Areas corresponding to the Quantitative Indicators for SFM. This part of the report is structured according to the 6 Criteria for SFM and includes the Quantitative Indicators and the Qualitative Indicators that relate directly to them.

The Output Tables included in the Annexes present the information reported on Quantitative Indicators by 35 signatory countries, the information included in the 11 desk studies compiled by the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section (Albania, Andorra, Greece, Holy See, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), and the information reported by the Russian Federation for the previous edition of the "State of Europe's Forests" report (2011). In view of the lack of comparable current data from the Russian Federation, to maintain the internal consistency of the report, the Russian information from 2011 is not included in the analysis and graphs, however it is included in the Output Tables.