

## Policy Brief

# Four pathways to govern Europe's multiple forest ecosystem services

Europe's forests provide many different products and services, such as wood, hunting, and tourism, among many others. Yet, some services of great value to people are not usually traded on markets: these include **carbon sequestration**, **water regulation**, **biodiversity conservation**, and **recreational experiences**. With markets absent, private forest owners do not have sufficient incentive to enhance quality and quantity in supplying these services, a costly market failure.

This policy brief outlines **four pathways** to secure better alignment between landowner incentives, stakeholder interests, and societal objectives towards Forest Ecosystem Services (FES) in Europe. These pathways are primarily based on findings from the H2020 project **SINCERE** and ERA-NET project **NOBEL**.



## 1 Enhance policy integration to align policy targets and financial means



An integrated forest policy framework is critical to ensure that various forest related policies at EU and member state level do not impede each other but work together in a manner that supports the management of Europe's forests for multiple FES. Increasing policy coordination and consistency in forest policy decision-making, in congruence with addressing trade-offs in implementation, implies: (a) aligning different forest-related policy instruments and ensuring that their objectives are backed-up by legal and financial means.

Those instruments should be flexible enough to meet regional priorities and socio-economic demands; (b) involving concerned societal groups and scientists systematically in goal formulation and implementation processes; and (c) monitoring policy implementation and adapting policies based on information.

## 2 Develop an EU-wide system for payments for forest ecosystem services (PES)



An EU-wide PES system holds significant potential to advance the provision of such services in line with the novel EU forest policy framework. Guiding principles for establishing an EU-wide payment system for forest ecosystem services to incentivize their provision are: (a) pre-agreeing on systemic objectives and funding; (b) selecting cost-effective and flexible implementation mechanisms; (c) combining scientific knowledge with participatory co-design; (d) adopting long-term perspectives and commitments; and (e) identifying priority areas for different FES (e.g. biodiversity hotspots, FES demand hotspots such as peri-urban forests).

However, some FES, such as watershed protection, are more locally rooted – and may thus also be better addressed through locally or nationally conceived incentive systems.

# 3

## Support innovation and experimentation through bottom-up participation



Innovations relating to multiple FES exist across Europe, but forest policy has been traditionally focusing on innovations for wood supply. There is a need to encourage and support innovation for the provision of multiple FES across Europe, through stakeholder engagement, and networking across sectors and policy levels.

Participatory approaches in forest modelling and planning can reduce conflicts and secure societal acceptability of selected management alternatives. Based on experimentation with various policy instruments, coordination (or competition, where appropriate) between landowners could enhance the effectiveness of supplying multiple FES.

# 4

## Improve information to monitor FES supply and demand



Improving the system for monitoring FES supply and demand is crucial, especially for regulating services (e.g. habitat provision and improvement of air quality) and cultural services (e.g. education and recreation). Agreeing on harmonized FES definitions, accompanied by standardized indicators, could greatly improve their monitoring on different spatial and temporal scales.

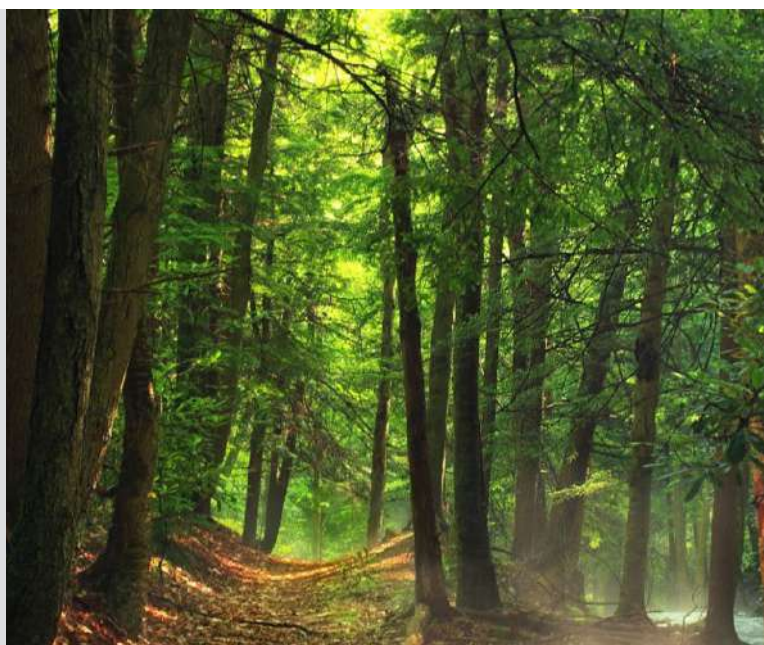
It is important to link this with spatially explicit information about societal demand for FES and forest owners' preferences.

Find out much more in a commentary paper available here  
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6393968>



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