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Special Report: N°21/2021

EU funding for biodiversity and climate change in EU forests: positive but limited results

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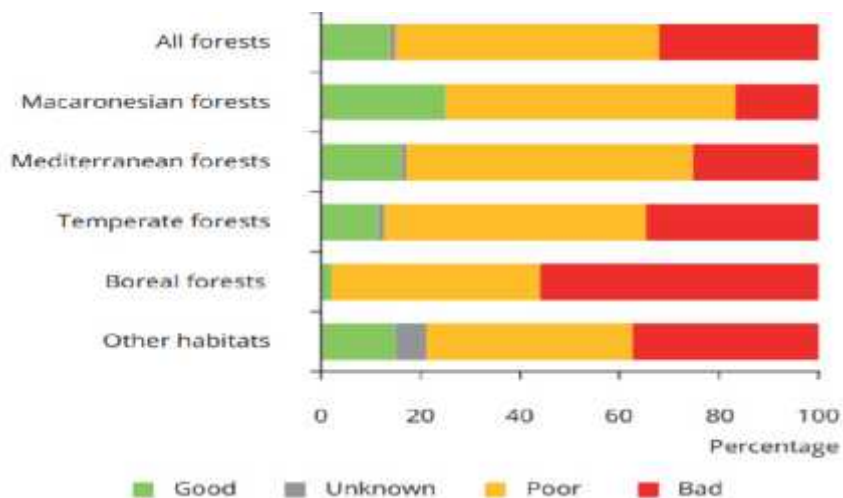




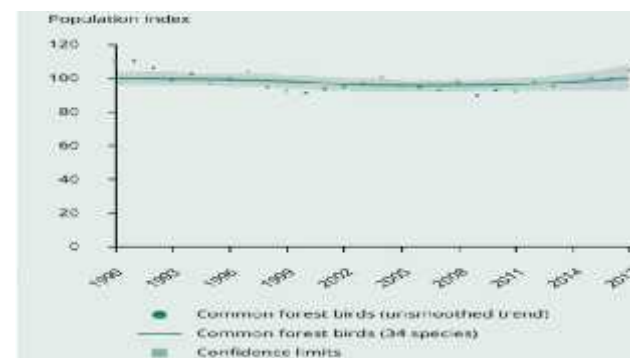
Why did we do this audit?

Condition of EU forests is deteriorating

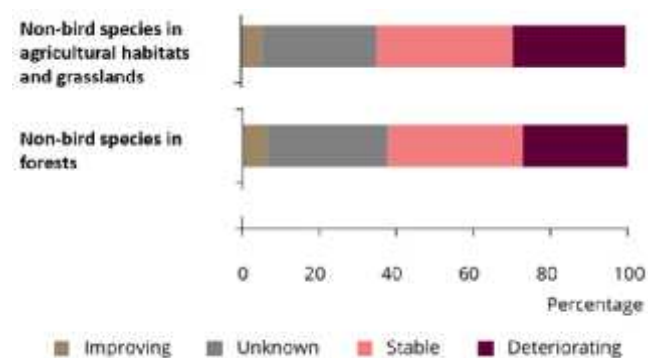
Conservation status of forests by region as of 2018



Forest bird index



Non-bird species index



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What questions did we ask?

**Does EU
action supports
biodiversity
protection and
address climate
in EU forests?**

We looked at:

- the impact of the Commission's action in a number of key environmental and climate policies and
- the particular impact of forestry measures funded through EU rural development.

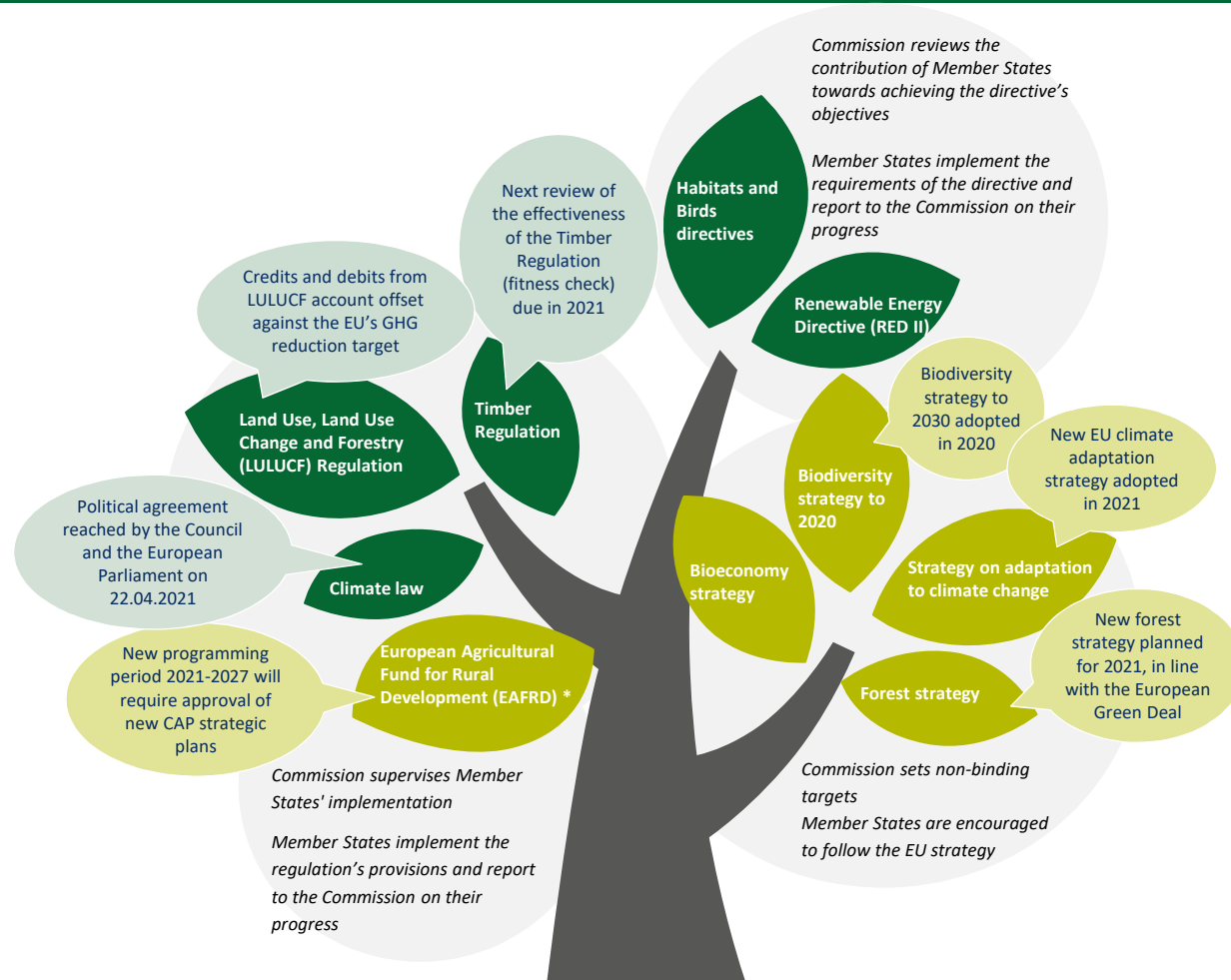
Period covered: **2014 - 2020**



What did we find?

1

EU partially protects biodiversity in forests (1)



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Details

Commission and
Member States
responsibilities

Legally
binding

Not legally
binding

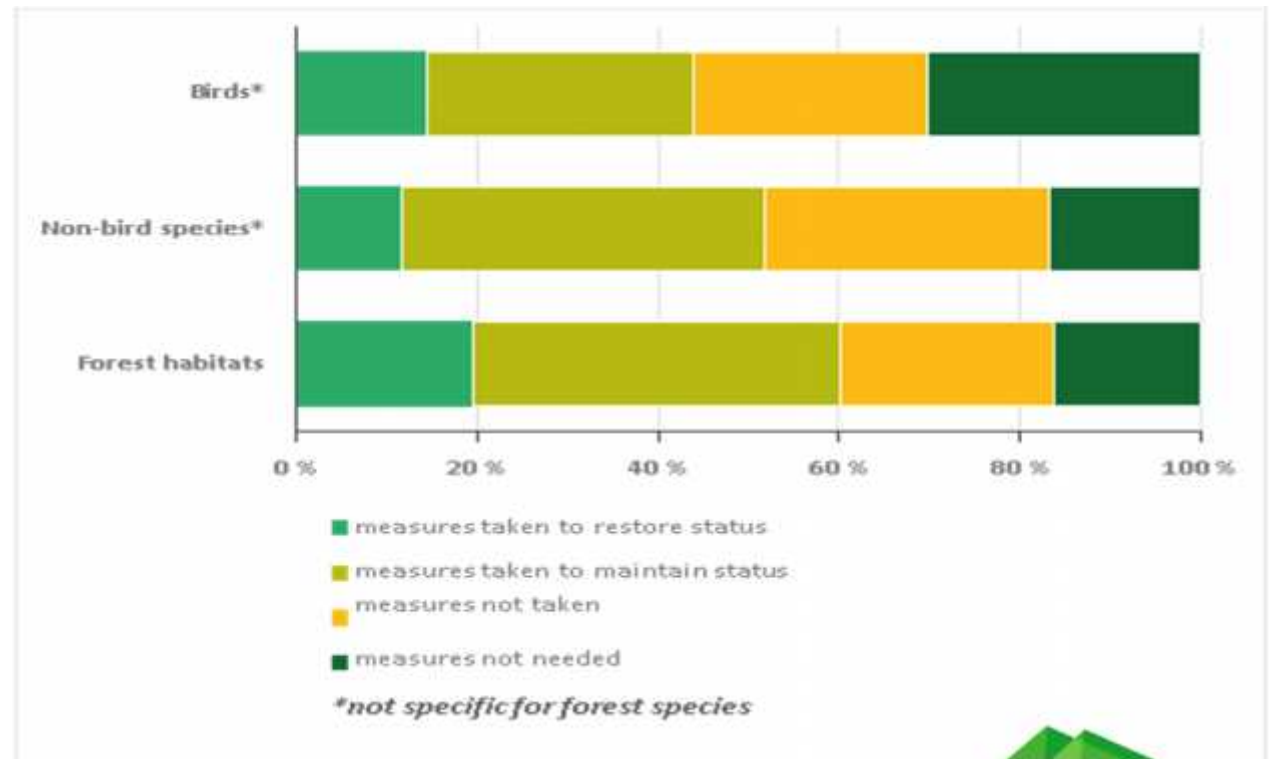


What did we find?

1

**EU partially
protects
biodiversity
in forests (2)**

Measures to maintain and restore status





What did we find?

2

**Illegal
logging still
occurs**

- The number of checks on domestic operators: **low**
- The quality of checks: **not analysed**
- The definitions of illegal logging: **may differ among MS**

Remote sensing:

- **great potentials, but not used consistently**

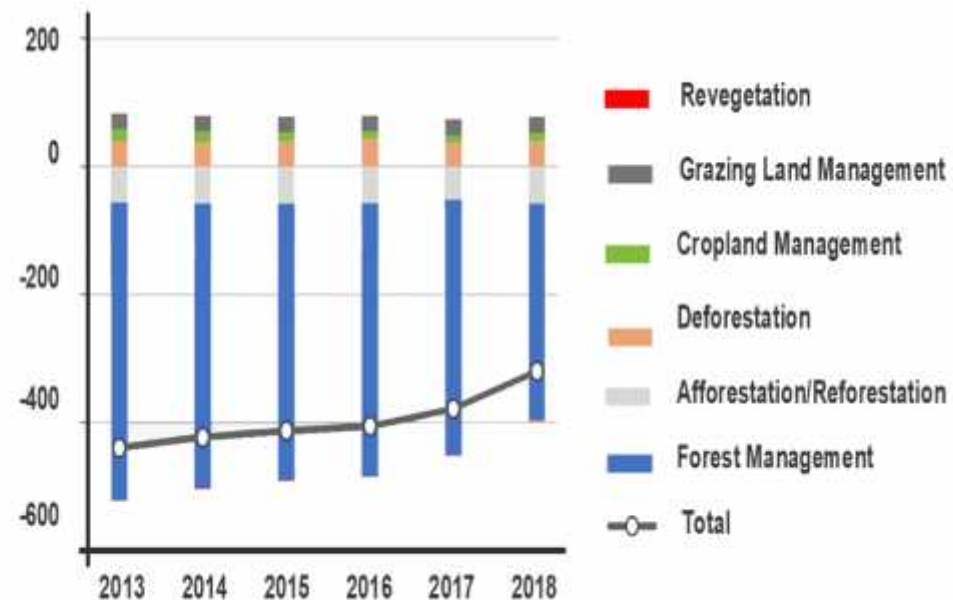


What did we find?

3

Net CO2 emissions and removals reported to UNFCCC, EU-27

The EU is taking steps to include forest in its climate change policies



Note: The data corresponds to EU-27 LULUCF net removals from activities reported under the Kyoto Protocol second commitment period.

Source: ECA, based on European Commission, EU Climate Action Progress Report, November 2020.



What did we find?

4

**The forestry measures:
no significant improvement
in biodiversity and tackling
climate change**

- Financial support to forestry (EAFRD): **only 3 % of all rural development spending**
- Forest management plans: **no significant contribution to environmentally sustainable activities**
- Rural development measures: **little impact on forest biodiversity and resilience to climate change**
- The common EU monitoring system: **not measuring the biodiversity and climate change effects of forestry measures**



What do we recommend (1)?

RECOMMENDATION 1

Improving the contribution to biodiversity and tackling climate change in forests by 2023

The Commission should draw up and apply an action plan to:

- **review the adoption and application of forest conservation measures;**
- **collect and disseminate knowledge amongst Member States on adapting forests to climate change.**



What do we recommend (2)?

RECOMMENDATION 2

Strengthening the fight against illegal logging by 2023

The Commission should:

- **assess the potential for making legislative proposals to improve review of Member State checks on the Timber Regulation;**
- **extend and promote use of geospatial intelligence.**



What do we recommend (3)?

RECOMMENDATION 3

Better focusing rural development forestry measures on biodiversity and climate change by 2023

The Commission should ensure that:

- **only sustainable forest management actions are supported;**
- **relevant information to assess the contribution of EU funded forestry measures to biodiversity and climate change mitigation and adaptation in forests are available.**

THANK YOU

for your attention!

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