

6th Policy Steering Committee Meeting, May 2026

As the project has entered its final year, ForestNavigator researchers provided the Policy Steering Committee with an overview of recent key outputs and reviewed exploratory EU mitigation pathway results, which will inform the final policy-relevant pathways. The meeting focused on the role of EU forests in climate-change mitigation and on the synergies and trade-offs between mitigation, biodiversity and bioeconomy goals.

Fulvio Di Fulvio, co-Principal Investigator of the project and senior researcher at IIASA, presented the common baseline scenario that anchors the analyses. This baseline scenario represents a continuation of observed wood-demand trends driven by GDP and population, with continuation current management practices and no additional policy measures. Additionally, he provided an update on the effort into aligning EU-scale (G4M) and national models across four case-study countries (Czechia, Italy, Ireland and Sweden), which showed good short-term agreement but growing, country-specific divergence in the longer term.

Discussions probed the dynamic nature of fossil emissions substitutions effects under economy-wide defossilization, the spatial treatment of forest resources in the models, the treatment of carbon and nature-credit values, the need to revise the starting point of model's projections as official inventories are updated, and how the baseline differs from the EU Reference Scenario.

Achilleas Zarkaliou, from Ricardo, presented the exploratory pathway results under alternative woody biomass demands and uses. Results from the baseline, low and high-demand scenarios reveal a timing trade-off. While low wood demands maximize near-term removals and biodiversity, high wood demands favors long-term carbon capture and sector value added at the cost of biodiversity. Greater wood circularity narrows the gap between the scenarios.

Feedback addressed wood trade, post-consumer wood and by-products, the realism of the recycling assumptions, the role of carbon pricing in PRIMES, the influence of discount rates and stock risk on scenario preferences.

Tord Snäll, from Skogforsk, presented the mitigation pathway results under biodiversity goals and other environmental targets. Applying the EU Biodiversity Strategy and the Nature Restoration Regulation increase EU forest carbon stocks and old-growth area, but once policy leakage outside EU is accounted for, differences between scenarios as total carbon stocks are very small (carbon leakage near 100%).

Discussion covered the definition and sources of protected-area data (IUCN classes and Natura 2000), the treatment of peatland forests under restoration, the suitability of single biodiversity indicators across Europe's diverse regions, and the inherent difficulty and uncertainty of estimating both carbon and biodiversity leakage.

Krystyna Springer, from IEEP, presented the policy reference scenario and future policy pathways, which were built on a review and coherence assessment of the existing policy landscape, translating implemented measures and national energy and climate plans (NECP) into the modelling, with selected CAP strategic plans measures and EU policies safeguards. Three stakeholder-tested storylines were presented: one with a medium-term climate mitigation focus, a resilience oriented one leveraging on bioeconomy growth, and a near-term climate ambition “stress test” to frame the choices for the pathway work. Three headline messages emerged: the trajectory matters as much as the end-point; demand assumptions (energy versus materials, circularity and cascading) are central; and resilience matters as much as mitigation ambition.

Stakeholders asked for more explicit time horizons and clearer optimization objectives, cautioned that circularity and cascading assumptions are fragile, raised leakage and import questions, and suggested clustering countries to reflect regional realities rather than relying on EU-level storylines alone, as well as framing the pathways in a more general context of resource sustainability and global trends rather than only focusing on climate objectives.