



ForestNavigator

DI.3 Interim report on the stakeholder's dialogue

Report on workshops 1&2



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Abstract

This interim report provides a comprehensive overview of stakeholder engagement activities with the project's Stakeholder Board, thus far. This focuses on the first stakeholder workshop, held in June 2023, and the second in September 2024. Experts from various forest-relevant fields were invited to interact with ForestNavigator research and researchers during thematic stakeholder engagement workshops. The two workshops aimed to inform participants about project findings and progress, gain feedback to ensure policy-relevant outputs and support interaction with the members of the Stakeholder Board.

This interim report discusses findings from both workshops in terms of stakeholder preferences regarding content presented and discussed during the workshops. This ranged from forest management options, market strategies, policy objectives, and plausible scenarios of interest for forest scenario dimensions. The design and functionality of the project's end dissemination tool, the ForestNavigator Portal, were also discussed during workshop activities. This report summarises both interests expressed and includes longer reports for each workshop in the attached annexes.

The report also provides insights into the overall reception and effectiveness of the engagement activities. Additionally, the report touches on the next steps within ForestNavigator Stakeholder Board engagement in the second half of the project.

Keywords

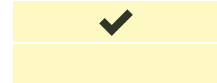
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Dissemination level

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Nature of the deliverable *



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I. Introduction / Opening

ForestNavigator maximises the policy relevance of its solutions by bringing together the most diverse minds and perspectives. During the ForestNavigator project, strong and continuous stakeholder engagement is secured by repeated stakeholder dialogues. For one of its key activities, the Stakeholder Board engagement is mainly achieved through the three stakeholder workshops carried out at critical points during the project. This interim report provides a concise overview summary of the Stakeholder Board and the first two stakeholder workshops. Full reports of each of the workshops are available on <https://www.forestnavigator.eu/resources/>.

An overview of other key stakeholder engagement activities, including the Policy Steering Committee and the Forest Policy Modelling Forum, can be found on www.forestnavigator.eu.

I.1. ForestNavigator Stakeholder Board

The stakeholders included in the ForestNavigator Stakeholder Board were identified through initial stakeholder mapping exercises described in [D1.1](#). During this mapping exercise, we ensured participation across five stakeholder categories (policymakers and agencies, experts and researchers, environmental and sociocultural NGOs, forest owners and managers, and business and industries), five geographic scales (European, national, global/international, sub-national, European regions), and gender. By engaging with this diverse mix of stakeholders, the project promotes the inclusion of different perspectives, needs, and priorities in the development and implementation of sustainable forest management, climate mitigation and adaptation strategies, and green growth opportunities across Europe and beyond.

Stakeholders are invited to join the Stakeholder Board, as well as invited to consent to being publicly [listed on the project website](#), before workshop invitations are extended.

While the project partners have ensured continued engagement with a core set of stakeholders, we continue to add stakeholders throughout the project's lifetime to ensure broad representation during workshops and to avoid stakeholder fatigue. For the selection, we continue to follow the same mapping process.

Overall, 29 people have participated on the Stakeholder Board and attended at least one workshop (each being attended by at least 20 stakeholders).

2. Key messages from both workshops

2.1. 1st Workshop

The first workshop, held on 19-20 June 2023, aimed to gain stakeholders' expert opinions and perspectives in a series of sessions to (1) co-develop alternative forest storylines that boost adaptation and mitigation in different EU regions, (2) identify elements of cultural ecosystem services and trade-offs between different types of ecosystem services, and (3) provide suggestions to develop and improve a forest Policy Tracker. The stakeholders also provided feedback on the design of the ForestNavigator Portal and future wood demand scenarios from the forest bioeconomy. The most relevant feedback was gathered on alternative forest management options in differing EU regions, to be biophysically modelled by ForestNavigator partners. The three main storylines for these management options were nature, bio-based economy, and multifunctionality-oriented stewardship. Each management storyline would achieve the same policy objectives using different forest management goals and measures.

Some general outcomes from the workshop sessions were:

- There were remarkable outcomes of the storyline discussions (e.g. the role of the wood use circularity being pivotal both in the nature-oriented and in the bio-based economy-oriented storyline). Such stakeholder contributions enhance the work of researchers through literature and modelling.
- There is a need to agree on certain terms and names as a consortium to avoid mismatches and misunderstandings and to cover the intended content as best as possible. For instance, the names of the storylines were adapted based on feedback from the stakeholders.
- The consortium should not overlook and work on the species composition of forests. It is understood that there are some rules of thumb to represent at least a minimum number of species in future forests.
- The concept of circularity was present between the lines in the scenarios, however the best use of resources for circularity needs to be looked at in more detail.
- The consortium should always be wary of the different needs of forests in different regions in the EU. However, in some cases, it is not a regional issue but rather accessibility and proximity of a forest to a big city.
- The permanence of carbon stocks is more important than increasing carbon sinks due to the disturbances caused by climate change.
- Risk management is an important factor in forest management, and one should take preventive actions into account.

The workshop also aimed to collect stakeholder feedback on the monetary evaluation of different ecosystem services, specifically focusing on the evaluation of cultural services. This feedback would be integrated into the conceptualisation of the ForestNavigator Portal and reflect on whether the ForestNavigator Policy Tracker could address any existing information gaps.

- The increasing demand for provisioning services might jeopardise the delivery of cultural services from forest ecosystems; they need to be carefully integrated and considered in envisioned forest pathways for the EU to ensure sustainable and multifunctionality-oriented management while pursuing policy objectives.

The stakeholders showed a high interest in the ForestNavigator Portal. They shared their wishes about what the Portal should or could present to complement other similar tools. Stakeholders recommended using and integrating existing data sets to the Portal, such as those that can be provided by the FAO. Participants and project partners discussed the need to agree as a consortium on the naming of indicators that we plan to provide on the ForestNavigator Portal (e.g., forest area, forest cover). This point was determined to be revisited at a later point in the Portal's development progression.

The Stakeholder Board attendees confirmed interest in project activities and outcomes throughout the workshop, both through formal feedback opportunities and informal comments noted.

A full workshop report was composed and shared with workshop participants. This report is publicly available on the ForestNavigator website: <https://www.forestnavigator.eu/wp-content/uploads/1st-Stakeholder-Workshop-June-2023.pdf>.

2.2. 2nd Workshop

The second stakeholder workshop took place on 15-16 September 2024. The original Stakeholder Board members were invited. Some participants who had scheduling conflicts or had left their organisation were replaced with other members from the same or similar organisations when possible.

The primary aim of the second workshop was to disseminate relevant project output and gather stakeholder feedback on ForestNavigator future scenarios, EU policy coherence, and the ForestNavigator Portal.

Stakeholders discussed future scenarios for three distinct themes: forest adaptation and mitigation potential, bioeconomy, and biodiversity. The findings from each group are summarised below.

- Forest adaptation scenarios should consider levers such as forest structural complexity, silvicultural measures promoting species mixtures and improved age structures, and assisted species migration. At the same time, maintaining the economic viability of forest management, financial incentives such as taxes or subsidies for stimulating adaptation pathways and considering the creation of new values like cultural and recreational ones.
- Biodiversity scenarios development considering the historical development of protection trends across EU regions, including forest management measures able to generate synergies with other forest-relevant goals and improve the functional connectivity of forest ecosystems.
- Woody biomass use to integrate aspects related to raising bioenergy demands in different EU regions, wood construction realistic scenarios considering expansion of living spaces and uses of low-quality timber as well as wood recycling/reuse and the growth in textile markets to replace synthetic fibres in some global regions but still at a low pace in the EU.

Stakeholder participants were impressed with the progress of policy coherence so far and the methodology behind it. Regarding the most relevant policies, a matrix was shared before the workshop to gain feedback and expert impressions of relevant synergies. Discussion during the workshop suggested additional policies to be included in the policy coherence exercise.

These included policies like the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), the Waste Framework Directive, the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive and green financing mechanisms, and water-related policies that were specifically discussed.

Participants were presented with a visual representation of the ForestNavigator Portal content (i.e. indicators), design, and functionalities before and during the workshop via a distributed survey and reference sheet. Through these materials, participants denoted content of highest interest. Participants shared their high satisfaction with the designs and were able to pose direct questions and feedback on the content and functionalities. Participants suggested multiple additions to the Portal through plenary discussions, such as adding data layers (i.e. water bodies) within map views and including historical data. The display options for uncertainty ranges were deemed particularly important and will be further discussed and explored within the consortium.

A full workshop report was composed and shared with workshop participants. This report is publicly available on the ForestNavigator website: <https://www.forestnavigator.eu/wp-content/uploads/2nd-Stakeholder-Workshop-September-2024.pdf>.

3. Conclusion and next steps

In conclusion, engagement with the ForestNavigator Stakeholder Board thus far has informed the project of policy-relevant interests for further investigation. Specifically, the stakeholders showed interest in the role of wood use circularity being pivotal both to a bio-based economy and nature-oriented storylines, the relevance of species compositions in forests for future adaptations, the permanence of carbon stocks, the need for varying management dependent on EU regions, and the preventative risk management actions. Stakeholders also identified risks for the delivery of cultural services from forest ecosystems, possibly contrasting with increasing demands for provisioning services. Both forest services need to be carefully integrated and considered to ensure sustainable and multi-functionality-oriented management. In terms of policy coherence with forest-relevant goals, in addition to policies already included in the matrix, the EU Deforestation Regulation, green financing, and corporate responsibility are of interest to the Stakeholder Board. For future scenarios, participant feedback has suggested a focus on adaptation potential levers increasing forest structural complexity by promoting species mixtures, assisted migration, and increased forest value creation by promoting additional services. For future biodiversity-relevant scenarios, they have underlined the role of the existing protection status and its regional variation, together with measures to increase forest connectivity. For bioeconomy relevant scenarios assumptions, they underlined to consider recent bioenergy demand increases, exploration of moderate expansion of living spaces and substitution benefits from wood use in the construction sector, and moderate scenarios for future textile demand growth in the EU.

For the design of the ForestNavigator Portal, stakeholder responses suggest the relevance of time series plot functionalities, and some indicators, such as forest above-ground biomass and forest carbon stocks indicators, are of the highest interest.

Stakeholders ranked both workshops positively in feedback surveys, particularly in terms of content relevance and opportunities for networking with others in their field. Stakeholders noted increased clarity on how their feedback will be used in the second workshop. Some stakeholders completed pre-workshop materials, while others found such materials somewhat overwhelming and noted an interest in having more time for collaboration in associated plenary presentation sessions. The stakeholder coordinating team takes this feedback into account for the final workshop.

As next steps, stakeholders will continue to be engaged with the ForestNavigator project in several ways:

- Receive information on project output through the biannual newsletter.
- Receive information and provide feedback on ForestNavigator project output and its sister projects, ForestPaths and PathFinder, through the annual online Forest Talks webinar. A subset of stakeholders has indicated their interest in providing additional feedback on interim versions and design elements of the ForestNavigator Portal, they will receive updates and feedback prompts throughout the next two years referring to the development of both the Data and Pathways Explorer.
- Receive information on the consolidated version of exploratory scenarios from WP7 (before the scenarios modelling) through a webinar during 2025 for receiving stakeholder feedback.
- Final workshop in spring 2026. We preliminary plan for the workshop to also include feedback opportunities for remaining deliverables, such as the report on recreational and cultural

values of EU forests under alternative management options (D4.6), the reports from WP7 on EU mitigation exploratory pathways (D7.1-7.4) and the ForestNavigator Portal.