

Europe's National Energy and Climate Plans 2030: Are they fit for purpose?

EU Member States' [National Energy and Climate Plans](#) are due to be published by the end of this year. It is critical that we get them right as they explain how we will achieve EU climate targets in the next 10 years. But such targets will be incredibly difficult to meet if the plans don't also increase biodiversity - the wide variety of plant and animal life our land and oceans support.

Forests are an essential part of both climate and biodiversity action

So, what should the plans include?

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Special Report on Land was clear that **forests are an essential part of both climate and biodiversity action**. Despite this, a [recent EU Commission report](#) found that European forests are absorbing less carbon dioxide each year, and that the main reason "is the increase in harvesting rates."

To a large extent, this increased harvesting is due to perverse incentives based on faulty carbon accounting which encourage Member States to increase the amount of forest biomass they burn for energy.

The plans must therefore prioritise investment in real renewables and the protection and restoration of our best natural climate solution - forests.

Fern's analysis

To find out whether they are fit for purpose, Fern analysed the National Energy and Climate Plans of five Member States - [Denmark, Germany, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden](#) - as well as information from their [National Forestry Accounting Plans](#).

We wanted to find out how transparent they are on four issues:

1. Source of wood for material and energy use
2. Ratio of wood for material versus energy use
3. The forests' ability to remove carbon from the atmosphere
4. Plans to protect forests and biodiversity

The results make for uncomfortable reading.

They reveal such a paucity of data that it is impossible to assess the climate, forest and biodiversity impact of each Member State's activities.

We urge Member States to work together to provide comprehensive information on all these points. That is the only way they can prove they are planning to take transparent, ambitious and sustainable action to meet climate goals.

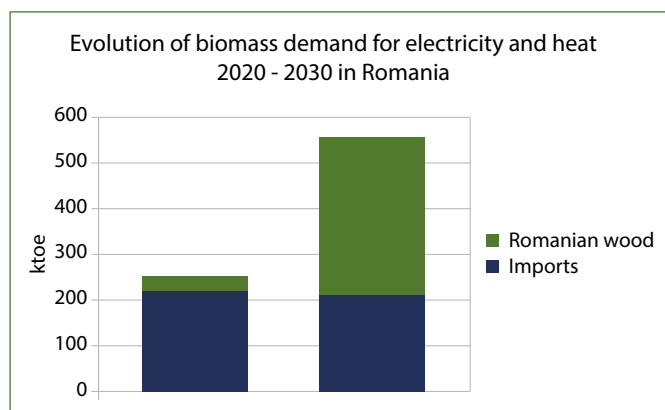
Once we have the final plans we will re-evaluate them to analyse their climate impact.

ROMANIA

Romania's forests are in the spotlight following the killings of two forest rangers who had been working to end widespread illegal logging. This has led to public protests which show how much Romanians care about forests.

What the Plan says about bioenergy:

- By 2030 Romania plans to produce 27.9 per cent of its energy renewably, but the Plan does not state how much would come from forest biomass.
- Most wood for bioenergy is used for firewood.¹
- Use of biomass will increase by 121 per cent.² Most of this will come from their own forests, since wood imports will decrease by five per cent between 2020 and 2030.



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What the Plan says about Romania's forests:

- Sustainable forest management will be improved to include the fight against pests, prevention of forest degradation and increased accessibility to forest funding. The Plan does not describe where such measures will be applied.
- Wooded areas will be extended, but it is unclear what is meant by 'wooded' and whether this may also include monoculture plantations.

Additional information from other sources:

- **The State of Europe's Forests (2015):** 7.8 per cent of total forest cover is protected.
- **Joint Research Centre's Wood Resource Balance Report (2015):** 43 per cent of Romania's timber came from unaccounted sources.

Scorecard

| | Transparency | Climate impact |
|---|----------------|------------------------------|
| Source of wood for energy and material use | No information | Pending official information |
| Ratio of wood for energy versus material use | No information | Pending official information |
| Forests' ability to remove carbon from the atmosphere | No information | Pending official information |
| Forest protection and biodiversity | No information | Pending official information |

Conclusion

The Government needs to listen to public protests and commit to protecting unique old-growth forests and those who work to defend them. The National Energy and Climate Plan needs to be clear that Romania will stop clearcutting biodiverse habitats and hiding behind tree-planting which does little to replace vast natural carbon sinks.

¹ NECP P. 63

² NECP P. 67