

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001620/24
to the Commission
Michal Wiezik (Renew)
(4 September 2024)**

Subject: Disinformation on shared vs exclusive competences

The EU has taken much needed legislative action on forests, the most recent example being the Nature Restoration law, which entered into force in August 2024. At the same time, disinformation is still being spread, with claims that responsibility for forest policies lies solely with the Member States. Past experience has shown us that such false claims can delay action at EU level and may baffle citizens and raise anti-EU sentiments, irrespective of whether they are the result of a genuine lack of knowledge or are purposefully planted to discourage action at EU level.

Given the increasingly alarming reports on the state of EU forests and their resilience (including as biodiversity hotspots and carbon sinks), and the need for a level playing field, what steps will the Commission take to ensure that it continues to adequately address evolving forest-related challenges, as provided for in the Treaties?

Submitted: 4.9.2024

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Šefčovič on behalf of the European Commission
(31 October 2024)**

Forests are indispensable for a climate-neutral Europe, resilient, and thriving environment, sustainable bioeconomy and healthy society.

Many forests in the EU are not in a good state, they suffer heavily from biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation and climate change, while there is surging demand for forest products and services. The EU has a variety of shared competences that concern forest protection and forestry to address these challenges.

In line with the objective of the European Green Deal ⁽¹⁾ to improve EU's forested area, both in quality and quantity, in 2021 the Commission adopted the EU Forest Strategy for 2030 ⁽²⁾.

Key actions under this strategy have already been delivered ⁽³⁾, notably the Nature Restoration Law ⁽⁴⁾ and several guidelines to improve implementation ⁽⁵⁾.

The EU also adopted the Deforestation Regulation ⁽⁶⁾. Furthermore, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development ⁽⁷⁾ supports interventions that contribute to the achievement of the EU's environmental and climate objectives such as afforestation, reforestation, fire prevention, and forest ecosystem improvement.

Since the information available on the state of forests as ecosystems and of the use of forest resources is fragmented, incomparable, and not fit for policy making, resulting in important knowledge gaps, the Commission proposed a Forest Monitoring Law ⁽⁸⁾, which is currently under examination by co-legislators.

The Commission will continue to pursue the objectives of the EU Forest Strategy, and will assess progress and the need for further action in this area.

The Commission is also tackling the threat of disinformation, for example through actions to counter foreign information manipulation and to build societal resilience against disinformation ⁽⁹⁾.

⁽¹⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

⁽²⁾ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/forest-strategy_en

⁽³⁾ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/forests_en

⁽⁴⁾ Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration and amending Regulation (EU) 2022/869, OJ L, 2024/1991, 29.7.2024.

⁽⁵⁾ Such as the the guidelines on biodiversity friendly afforestation and reforestation [SWD(2023)61], on closer to nature forestry [SWD(2023) 284], on old-growth forests [SWD(2023)62] and on payment for ecosystem services [SWD (2023)285] .

⁽⁶⁾ Adopted by the European Parliament and Council, Regulation (EU) 2023/1115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 31 May 2023 on the making available on the Union market and the export from the Union of certain commodities and products associated with deforestation and forest degradation and repealing Regulation (EU) No 995/2010, OJ L 150, 9.6.2023, p. 206-247.

⁽⁷⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/2115/oj>

⁽⁸⁾ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/publications/proposal-regulation-forest-monitoring-framework_en

⁽⁹⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/topics/strategic-communication-and-tackling-disinformation_en