

(English version)

Question for written answer E-000682/25
to the Commission
César Luena (S&D)
(13 February 2025)

Subject: Progress in implementing the EU biodiversity strategy for 2030 and in protecting primary and old-growth forests

The EU biodiversity strategy for 2030 establishes that, by 2030, 30% of all EU land and sea areas should be protected, with 10% of land and sea areas — including all remaining EU primary and old-growth forests — being strictly protected.

In view of the above:

1. What progress have Member States made in implementing the biodiversity strategy and, specifically, in achieving the targets of protecting 30% and strictly protecting 10% of EU land and sea areas, including strictly protecting all primary and old-growth forests in the EU?
2. Given that, under the subsidiarity principle, it falls to Member States to define the criteria and specific measures for protecting their old-growth forests, does the Commission know the state and condition of all primary and old-growth forests in the EU?
3. What percentage of primary and old-growth forests are currently strictly protected in the EU?

Submitted: 13.2.2025

Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(15 May 2025)

1. The Joint Research Centre monitors the progress of Member States in implementing the EU Biodiversity Strategy ⁽¹⁾ for 2030 and its targets ⁽²⁾. The European Environment Agency (EEA) has published dashboards on the reported progress towards achieving 30% of protected areas coverage on land ⁽³⁾ and at sea ⁽⁴⁾ by 2030. For the period between 2011 and 2022, these dashboards show a doubling of marine areas designated as protected ⁽⁵⁾, but only limited progress on land ⁽⁶⁾, and hence a need for Member States to step up efforts if the targets are to be achieved by 2030.

Given that only seven Member States have submitted pledges that outline their national coverage of strictly protected areas, a reliable EU-level assessment of progress towards achieving 10% of strictly protected areas by 2030 will only be possible once the EEA has revised its reporting tool of nationally protected areas in 2026.

Regarding primary and old-growth forests, the Commission is currently analysing their mapping and protection by Member States. Member States should map their primary and old growth forests by 2025 and strictly protect them by 2029 ⁽⁷⁾.

2. The Commission does not have specific information ⁽⁸⁾ on the condition of primary and old-growth forests in the EU, nor does it currently intend to undertake such an analysis, except where such forests fall under provisions of the Habitats Directive ⁽⁹⁾ or the Nature Restoration Regulation ⁽¹⁰⁾. A common definition of old-growth forest was provided in the 2023 Commission guidelines ⁽¹¹⁾.

3. While the Commission does not have official data on the coverage of primary and old-growth forests, of those areas mapped, 87% are within strictly protected areas ⁽¹²⁾. However, this figure needs to be read with caution given the significant mapping deficit in certain Member States ⁽¹³⁾.

⁽¹⁾ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/biodiversity-strategy-2030_en.

⁽²⁾ E.g. A coherent network of protected areas: <https://dopa.jrc.ec.europa.eu/kcbd/EUBDS2030-dashboard/?version=1#Target%201>.

⁽³⁾ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/indicators/terrestrial-protected-areas-in-europe>.

⁽⁴⁾ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/indicators/marine-protected-areas-in-europes-seas>.

⁽⁵⁾ From 5.9% in 2012 to 12.3% in 2022.

⁽⁶⁾ From 24.3% in 2011 to 26.1% in 2022.

⁽⁷⁾ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/publications/guidelines-defining-mapping-monitoring-and-strictly-protecting-eu-primary-and-old-growth-forests_en.

⁽⁸⁾ Beyond the information that is published in the scientific literature: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41597-021-00988-7>, <https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.14404>.

⁽⁹⁾ Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7-50.

⁽¹⁰⁾ 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.

⁽¹¹⁾ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/cef2f588-7c54-11ee-99ba-01aa75ed71a1>.

⁽¹²⁾ <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC124671>.

⁽¹³⁾ Estimated at ~4.4 million hectares.