

2023 - 2025



Connecting forestry and Agroforestry partnerships across Europe

Final project booklet

*Advancing innovation and best practices
among Operational Groups at the EU level*



Prepared by

Partners of FOREST4EU

Further Information
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Executive summary

The European Union's forests and diverse agroforestry systems are vital assets, providing essential raw materials, regulating climate, preserving biodiversity, and sustaining rural livelihoods. These ecological and economic pillars, however, are now confronted by unprecedented and intertwined crises.

The rapid acceleration of climate change introduces severe weather events—from prolonged droughts and catastrophic wildfires to extreme windthrow events—that fundamentally challenge the stability and productivity of these landscapes. Concurrently, global market pressures, the need for robust bioeconomy development, and the demanding mandates of the European Green Deal (EGD)—particularly regarding biodiversity protection and climate neutrality—require a revolutionary shift in management practices.

In this high-stakes environment, traditional knowledge alone is insufficient. What is needed is a systematic, widespread, and effective transfer of practical, tested, and ready-to-implement innovations emerging directly from the field. This was the foundational premise of the FOREST4EU project (European innovation partnership network promoting operational groups dedicated to forestry and agroforestry, Grant Agreement n° 101086216).

Coordinated by the Università degli Studi di Firenze (UNIFI), FOREST4EU was not merely a research project; it was designed as a dynamic, responsive knowledge-transfer machine. Its core strategic goal was to establish a lasting, robust bridge between the pioneering, localized efforts of EIP-AGRI Operational Groups (OGs) and the vast, diverse community of European forest owners, farmers, advisors, industry professionals, and policymakers.

By capturing, translating, structuring, and disseminating knowledge that often existed only in regional dialects or technical reports, FOREST4EU aimed to democratise access to innovation, accelerate the adoption of sustainable practices, and provide concrete evidence for policy refinement.

As this ambitious Horizon Europe project concludes its term in December 2025, this comprehensive final booklet serves as the definitive synthesis of three years of intensive, transnational collaboration. It encapsulates the collective wisdom derived from a network that successfully engaged with 103 Operational Groups across the continent.

This volume presents the innovative solutions that are actively shaping a resilient, multifunctional, and profitable future for Europe's rural and forested landscapes. It is a testament to the power of shared expertise, demonstrating that by pooling localized successes, we can achieve large-scale, systemic change across the entire European Union.

01

The Architecture of Knowledge Transfer Methodology and Scope

The successful execution of FOREST4EU hinged on the development of a rigorous and scalable methodology for identifying and standardizing practical knowledge, ensuring it was suitable for transnational exchange. The primary obstacle in this process is the inherent fragmentation and heterogeneity of the EIP-AGRI landscape, where innovations are developed in specific regional contexts and documented in over a dozen different languages, severely limiting their visibility and utility across borders.

1.1

The "Network of Networks" – Building a Sustainable Community

The collaborative structure [1] of FOREST4EU was its main organizational innovation. The five thematic ITHubs were complemented by a Transversal Hub, dedicated to addressing cross-cutting issues like gender, governance, business models, and digitalization. This structure formed a vital, interregional "network of networks."

The success of this structure was facilitated by two key roles:

- **ITHub Managers:** responsible for technical coordination, content quality control (ES/PA development), and thematic strategy across Europe.
- **National Single Points of Contact (NSPOCs):** tasked with local implementation, linguistic accuracy, stakeholder engagement, and organizing national workshops and policy focus groups, ensuring that the European-level project was firmly rooted in local realities.

Stakeholder engagement focused particularly on "professional multipliers"—advisors, forest managers, and association leaders—who possess the leverage to disseminate knowledge across large numbers of end-users. As of May 2024, the comprehensive stakeholder database contained 250 stakeholders, with the highest interest demonstrated in the highly relevant areas of Sustainable Forest Management & Ecosystem Services (ITHub 3) and Adaptation to Climate Change (ITHub 2). The active participation in events like the Policy Focus Groups (PFGs), which currently register 117 dedicated stakeholders, confirms the successful establishment of a sustainable community designed to continuously link the policy community with the latest field-level innovation research.

1.2

From Field to Knowledge Transfer The Methodology Behind

The project's methodology was meticulously designed to overcome these barriers through a multi-layered process of selection, translation, and standardization. The European consortium, comprised of partners from nine strategically chosen countries—including Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Slovenia, Latvia, Germany, Finland, and Croatia—provided the necessary linguistic and professional expertise. Innovation Topic Hub (ITHub) members, fluent in the languages of the participating Operational Groups, were instrumental in the initial capture and drafting phases, ensuring the fidelity and contextual accuracy of the knowledge.



Fig. 1. Factsheets from the project

The Knowledge Generation Sequence:

- 1. Identification of Needs and Strategic Alignment:** before collection began, the ITHubs performed a critical analysis of the sector's most urgent challenges. This involved scrutinizing findings and recommendations from major Horizon 2020 and thematic network projects such as AFINET, ROSEWOOD4.0, INNOFOREST, and SINCERE. This foundational review ensured that the innovations targeted for collection were not merely interesting, but directly addressed validated, high-priority needs across the European forestry and agroforestry value chains. A total of **86 European OGs** formally endorsed FOREST4EU's dissemination efforts, providing explicit consent for their innovative solutions to be shared at the EU level.
- 2. Extended Summaries (ES) – The Foundation of Detail:** the initial data capture phase culminated in the creation of **175 detailed Extended Summaries**. These documents, typically two to four pages long and prepared exclusively in English, served as the comprehensive technical source material. The ES provided sufficient context, methodological detail, and preliminary results to satisfy the requirements of professional multipliers, researchers, and policymakers, forming the indispensable technical backbone of the project's knowledge repository.
- 3. Practice Abstracts (PAs) – The Practitioner's Guide:** building on the robust technical foundation of the ES, the project generated a total of **175 Practice Abstracts**. These are the primary dissemination vehicle for end-users—foresters, farmers, and practitioners—prioritizing immediate practical applicability and clarity. PAs adhere strictly to the common EIP-AGRI Network format, which is universally recognized and designed to facilitate quick knowledge exchange. Each PA succinctly describes the problem, the innovative solution, practical recommendations for implementation, and necessary contact information. A crucial element of the project's accessibility strategy was the commitment that every PA is available in English and has been translated into at least one additional national language (Croatian, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Latvian, Portuguese, Slovenian, or Spanish). This translation effort represents a major step towards making transnational innovation directly usable by local stakeholders.

1.3

Categorisation and Systemic Impact of Innovation

To gain a clear understanding of the transformation underway in the sector, FOREST4EU systematically classified the collected solutions across six internationally recognized innovation types, highlighting that change is not solely technological:

- **Technological Innovation:** introduction of new hardware, software, or digital tools (e.g., DSS, mobile apps);
- **Process Innovation:** changes in methods, logistics, or organizational workflows (e.g., new silvicultural regimes, optimized transportation planning);
- **Product Innovation:** creation of new goods or significantly improved existing ones (e.g., new bio-based materials, higher-quality NWFPs);
- **Service Innovation:** new services provided to forest owners or the supply chain (e.g., carbon accounting services, customized advisory support);
- **Organisational Innovation:** changes in management structures or collaborative models (e.g., group management schemes, new certification standards).
- **Social Innovation:** changes in attitudes, behaviours, or governance (e.g., new participatory decision-making models, stakeholder engagement tools).

Analysis of the 175 collected innovations demonstrated a strong focus on doing things better and smarter. The most prevalent categories were technological (58) and process-oriented (47), reflecting the sector's current drive towards digitalization and efficiency gains in operational management. However, the significant number of new services (34) and products (17) collected confirms a concurrent effort to diversify income streams and respond to market demands for added-value, bio-based outputs.



The collected knowledge was strategically organized into five thematic areas, each managed by a dedicated Innovation Topic Hub (ITHub), designed to streamline communication and focus expertise:

- **ITHub 1** (Wood Mobilisation): focusing on supply chain efficiency, logistics, and traceability.
- **ITHub 2** (Adaptation to Climate Change): targeting resilience, risk assessment, and new silvicultural strategies.
- **ITHub 3** (Sustainable Forest Management & Ecosystem Services): integrating biodiversity, water, and carbon services into management planning.
- **ITHub 4** (Non-Wood Forest Products): enhancing the value, sustainability, and management of NWFPs (e.g., cork, resin, mushrooms).
- **ITHub 5** (Agroforestry Systems): integrating trees, crops, and livestock for multifunctional land use.

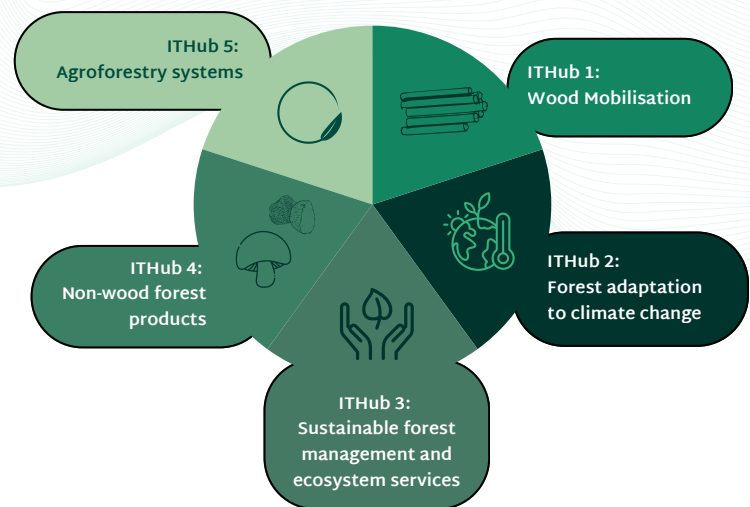


Fig. 2. ITHubs structure

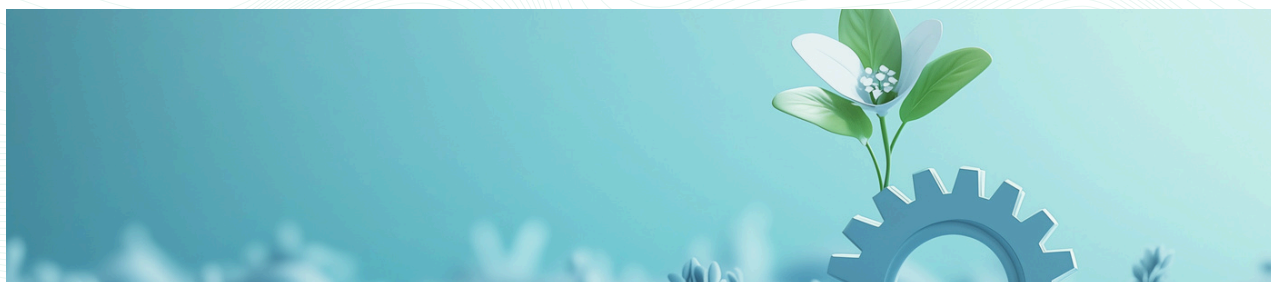


The **geographic distribution** of participating OGs revealed a significant concentration of innovation activity in Southern Europe, with the highest participation from Spain (24), Portugal (24), France (19), and Italy (11). This concentration underscores the specific regional pressures—especially those related to drought, fire risk, and fragmented ownership—that are acting as powerful catalysts for rapid, localized innovation.

02

Detailed Insight into Transformative Innovations (ITHubs 1-5)

This chapter provides an in-depth exploration of the most impactful innovations collected by FOREST4EU, demonstrating the practical application of EIP-AGRI Operational Group findings.



2.1

ITHub 1: Streamlining the Wood Mobilisation Supply Chain

This Hub focuses on overcoming the chronic challenges of fragmentation, logistical bottlenecks, and inconsistent information flow within the European wood supply chain by leveraging digital and organizational innovations. Operational Groups developed tools for advanced, proactive financial and logistical planning, such as the WoodChainManager, a web-based application that allows forest owners to calculate a priori timber supply costs to optimize operations. Complementing this, specialized Timber Transportation Software utilizes online databases to map timber assets from dispersed, small lots and plan the most economical, multi-stop transport routes, thereby reducing both overheads and emissions.

For forest owners, especially those with small holdings, the Estate Planning (eGOZD/MojGozdar) solution integrates price indices and cost calculators to empower them with planned, long-term management, supported by the MOTI Mobile Application for cost-effective, professional field inventory using the Bitterlich method via a smartphone. Quality and compliance are ensured through product innovations like the CoolWood® low-temperature, high-humidity storage process for superior log preservation, alongside



a comprehensive Web-based Due Diligence/Traceability system that guarantees timber provenance from stump to mill, essential for European Timber Regulation (EUTR) compliance. Finally, innovations promote the valorization of local hardwoods, demonstrated by the Noir&Sens Project's low-energy thermal treatment process and the Prefabricated Modular Construction System which utilizes local oak and beech to provide a competitive, environmentally sound, and cost-reducing alternative to traditional construction methods.

2.2

ITHub 2: Building Forest Resilience to Climate Change

ITHub 2 innovations center on equipping forest managers with the tools and strategies necessary to mitigate risks and enhance forest stability against climate change impacts like drought and pests. Critical preventive tools include the Bioclimsol Decision Support System (DSS), which integrates GPS and spatial climatic models to provide a dual assessment: quantifying the current risk of dieback in existing stands and evaluating the future ecological incompatibility for potential afforestation species.

This evidence-based approach is reinforced by social innovations like "climate vigilance maps," which model risk and serve as a communication tool to encourage genetic diversification and the adoption of more resilient provenance sources. For early warning and monitoring, the GO-SURF Operational Group spearheaded the use of UAVs (drones) equipped with multispectral cameras to rapidly and objectively map stressed forest areas by identifying reduced photosynthetic activity before visual symptoms appear, an essential step in selecting resilient mother trees for future reforestation. Similarly, the Geosuber Tool uses satellite imagery to streamline the required bureaucratic process for felling legally protected dead trees, such as cork oaks.

Furthermore, process innovations demonstrate eco-efficient management: targeted strip cutting in silvicultural trials was proven to promote superior natural regeneration and resilience compared to clear-cutting, while the CO2MARCHE OG utilized Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) to quantify emission reductions from climate-friendly operations, such as using electric chainsaws, which directly generates verifiable carbon credits, providing a new economic incentive for climate mitigation.

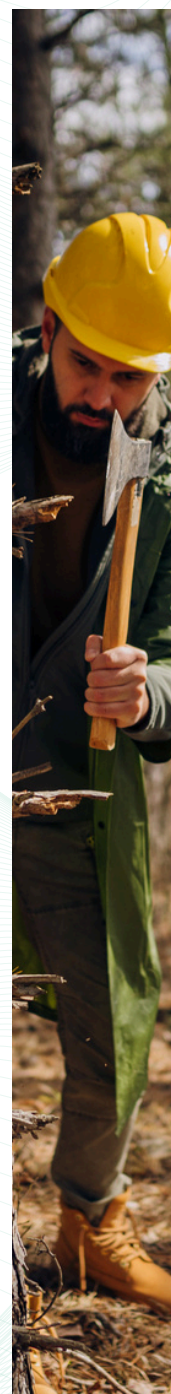
2.3

ITHub 3: Integrating Ecosystem Services into Forest Management

This Hub provides practical methodologies and tools that allow forest managers to transition beyond sole timber production to holistically manage and valorize the full suite of Ecosystem Services (ES), including biodiversity, water, and carbon sequestration. A core social and process innovation is the Marteloscope, a field-based training tool that allows participants to simulate thinning regimes while specialized software instantly quantifies the impacts on profitability and biodiversity; the advanced Biodiversity Marteloscope (BIOSEIFORTE) takes this further by creating a 3D digital twin that integrates precise biodiversity parameters, such as the location of dendrothelia and microhabitats, thereby making biodiversity conservation a measurable management objective.

To facilitate simple field assessment, the Index of Biodiversity Potential (IBP) was developed as a key process innovation, using a standardized scoring system across 10 measurable factors to empower non-specialists to quickly audit and visualize a stand's potential. Digital support for collaboration comes from the OUI-GEF online geocatalogue, a centralized repository that disseminates metadata and instructions for standardized management tools, while the Keys for Forest Types Classification Schemes (GO-SURF) addressed a major reporting hurdle by providing cross-referenced tables to accurately translate local forest classifications into regional and EU systems, vital for consistent reporting of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) Indicators.

Finally, to overcome the economic barriers of property fragmentation, the Group Management Trial in Normandy demonstrated an organizational solution where aggregating small municipal and private parcels created sufficient timber volume to attract commercial buyers, unlocking economic viability and promoting active, sustainable forest management in fragmented landscapes.



2.4

ITHub 4: Maximising the Value of Non-Wood Forest Products (NWFP)

ITHub 4 focuses on enhancing the economic potential, sustainability, and traceability of Non-Wood Forest Products, including resin, cork, nuts, and forest residues, through improved monitoring, quality control, and value-added processing. The Spanish Resin Data Observatory (RSO) serves as a critical service innovation, centralizing reliable economic data, pricing trends, and a profitability calculator to support sound investment decisions in the resin sector.

For cork oak, the development of precise fertilization tables based on detailed soil analysis ensures the long-term health and productivity of the montado ecosystem. In mycological resource management, the Smartbasket App uses gamification to build trust and incentivize wild mushroom collectors to share essential geospatial data for sustainable yield modelling, complemented by the Micontrol App, an ICT tool that uses QR codes and database queries for real-time harvest monitoring and fraud detection. The Burgundy Truffle (BIJOU) project successfully demonstrated a silvicultural management tool that strategically integrates wood and *Tuber uncinatum* truffle production for diversified forest income.

Key innovations for quality and disease control include the ValorCast (Chestnut) project's recommendation of hydrophobic coatings and controlled atmosphere packaging for superior post-harvest handling, and the major technological breakthrough of the Endotherapeutic Treatment of Chestnut Trees, which uses the minimally invasive BITE® tool to inject beneficial fungi (*Trichoderma* spp.) directly into the sapwood, significantly enhancing plant defense and reducing nut rot. Finally, embracing the circular economy, innovations explored the valorization of waste, such as recovering high-value compounds like suberin from bark residue using supercritical carbon dioxide extraction (scCO₂), and the development of a Mobile kiln prototype that enables the in situ production of biochar from logging residues, turning forest waste into a decentralized revenue stream and a high-demand soil amendment.



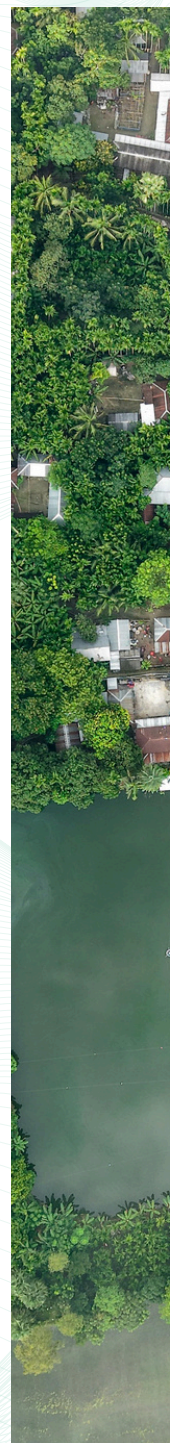
2.5

ITHub 5: Integrating Solutions for Agroforestry Systems

This Hub explores highly integrated solutions for agroforestry that successfully combine elements of forestry and agriculture to balance production with essential environmental benefits, focusing on ecological processes, water management, and animal welfare. The Keyline Agricultural System offers a profound process innovation for water resource management, using precision plowing and contour lines to distribute surface water, thereby enhancing soil infiltration, fertility, and organic matter, and achieving an impressive 80% survival rate for newly planted oaks in semi-arid environments.

For cost-effective, large-scale ecological monitoring, the Mapping Soil Organic Matter (SOLO) method utilizes advanced VNIR spectroscopy and satellite data to map soil organic matter and assess carbon sequestration in biodiverse sown pastures. Innovations also dramatically improved silvopastoral efficiency and animal welfare, including the Autonomous Feeding System (FORESTCELTA), an automated, mobile system designed to feed livestock in extensive systems, which reduces labor and improves forest sustainability by controlling grazing.

Furthermore, neck-worn sensors from the Geolocation and Animal Monitoring (CLIM'AGIL) project provide real-time monitoring, and comparative trials confirmed that trees in silvopastoral systems significantly improve microclimatic conditions, demonstrably reducing chronic stress in cattle. For remote management, UAV Monitoring of Pastures (GEOBIA) uses drone data and machine learning to accurately map Sown Biodiverse Pastures, while the NDVI Monitoring of Pasture Quality integrates satellite and ground-based optical sensors to provide farmers with reliable, real-time indicators of pasture quality, overcoming tree canopy interference. A major organizational and policy achievement is the new PEFC Certification Standard specifically tailored for the tree component within agroforestry systems, establishing the first Europe-wide certification standard in this sector to recognize and reward sustainable integrated management.



03

Maximising Impact through Dissemination, Capacity Building, and Strategic Collaboration

The value of the collected innovations only materializes when they are effectively disseminated and integrated into practice. FOREST4EU employed a targeted and multi-channel strategy to ensure maximum reach and educational depth.

3.1

Open Science and Strategic Dissemination Repositories

The **project's dissemination strategy** was firmly anchored in the principles of FAIR data (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable), ensuring long-term utility of the knowledge. The 175 Practice Abstracts were transformed into **172** visually consistent and user-friendly **factsheets**—concise, three-page documents adhering to the FOREST4EU visual identity—to optimize practitioner uptake.

- **Universal, Long-Term Repositories:** All 172 factsheets were uploaded to two key repositories:
 - **EU-FarmBook:** This platform, specifically created by the European Commission, is the primary source for agricultural and forestry innovation, ensuring direct reach to the EIP-AGRI community and professional advisors.
 - **Zenodo:** Crucial for Horizon Europe's Open Science mandates, Zenodo provides long-term archival stability by assigning a unique Digital Object Identifier (DOI) to every uploaded document. This guarantees high findability, permanent accessibility, and robust traceability for academic and policy referencing.

- **Thematic Specialization and Synergy:** To ensure targeted dissemination, factsheets were also strategically uploaded to specialized thematic platforms:
 - **Rosewood 4.0 Network:** This network, focused on sustainable wood mobilization, received 35 factsheets, primarily from ITHub 1, placing best practices directly in front of regional wood sector clusters.
 - **Climate-ADAPT:** The European Commission's platform for climate adaptation received 33 factsheets (ITHub 2), facilitating direct access to climate resilience strategies for policymakers and regional planners.
 - **Oppla:** As the EU's central platform for Nature-Based Solutions (NBS), Oppla received 36 factsheets (ITHub 3), positioning the project's findings within the wider environmental conservation community.

3.2

Capacity Building Material (CBM) and Knowledge Deepening

Dissemination goes beyond simple visibility; it requires dedicated educational materials to facilitate deep learning and implementation. The project developed extensive **Capacity Building Material (CBM)** focused on a high-priority subset of innovations. The selection process was highly democratic and field-driven:

1. **Community of Practice Assessment:** initial ranking by ITHub members and the Community of Practice;
2. **External Expert Consultation:** validation by external subject matter experts to confirm technical relevance and applicability;
3. **National Prioritization Workshops:** crucially, local stakeholders (e.g., 53 in Italy, 48 in Slovenia) selected the most relevant topics based on local needs, ensuring the CBM addressed real-world priorities.



To facilitate true peer-to-peer learning and observation of innovations in practice, the project planned and executed five international field visits (one per ITHub) during 2024 and 2025. These immersive visits allowed practitioners and advisors to directly interact with the Operational Groups responsible for the innovation, observe the tools and processes firsthand, and engage in detailed Q&A sessions—the ultimate form of practical knowledge transfer.

These strategic collaborations, particularly with the REA and DG AGRI, significantly bolstered FOREST4EU's ability to achieve its objectives, guaranteeing that the project's outputs would have long-term visibility and a concrete influence on the strategic direction of European forestry and agroforestry research and innovation.

04

Project Key Events Establishing a Knowledge Transfer Implementation

4.1

Webinars

The FOREST4EU project hosted the webinar **"Women Facilitating Innovation in the Forest Sector – Too Easy to Be True?"**¹ on May 9, 2025. and it focused on the pivotal role of women in driving innovation within the traditionally male-dominated forestry and agroforestry sectors. Speakers from related initiatives, including Fem4Forest, Fem2forests, and WOFO International, presented successful case studies and key insights.

The discussion emphasized that innovation encompasses more than just technology, extending to crucial areas like sustainable practices, knowledge transfer, and climate change adaptation.



Fig. 3. 1st webinar banner

While the webinar acknowledged persistent challenges, such as the underrepresentation of women in leadership and gender stereotypes, it highlighted the potential of women-led networks to foster collaboration and empowerment.

The event concluded with a strong call for intersectional inclusion, stressing that meaningful structural change requires providing all marginalized groups with access, voice, influence, and safety to fully unleash their innovative potential.

¹ <https://www.forest4eu.eu/news/forest4eu-upcoming-webinar-9th-of-may-2025/>

The webinar “**Exploring the role of knowledge repositories**”² brought together managers of key European platforms to discuss how to ensure the **long-term availability** and **wide-ranging dissemination** of practical innovations in the forestry and agroforestry sectors.



Fig. 4. 2nd webinar banner

During the session, **three main platforms** used for knowledge transfer were presented:

- **Rosewood 4.0:** a platform that shares best practices for sustainable wood mobilization.
- **EU Farmbook:** a platform offering new tools for foresters, including a dedicated Farm Assistant chatbot and support functionalities for smaller projects like Operational Groups (OGs).
- **Climate-ADAPT and FIS (Forest Information System for Europe):** respectively, the European portal for long-term climate adaptation and the forest information system, which provides comprehensive resources like case studies and policy overviews on adaptation options.



Fig. 5. 3rd webinar banner

The last webinar of FOREST4EU successfully linked the vital role of forestry and agroforestry directly to the European “**From Farm To Fork**” strategy,³ showcasing pivotal findings from the project's Innovation Topic Hubs (ITHubs) focused on Non-Wood Forest Products (NWFP) and Agroforestry.

Key Insights for Sustainable Food Systems:

- **Innovation & Supply Chains:** innovations from Operational Groups (OGs) across Europe were presented, covering products like chestnuts, truffles, flour, and berries, and systems integrating livestock into agroforestry. A crucial takeaway was the need for support to build resilient supply chains and increase market consumption for these sustainable NWFP and agroforestry alternatives.
- **The Experience Economy:** presenters emphasized viewing forests as accessible “farms” for the bioeconomy. To significantly boost the value of NWFPs, the Experience Economy model is key, combining products with authentic and experience-driven services.

² <https://www.forest4eu.eu/news/upcoming-webinar-on-knowledge-repositories-08-october-2025/>

³ <https://www.forest4eu.eu/news/webinar-from-farm-to-fork-concept-04-december-2025/>

4. **Certification for Credibility:** third-party schemes, like PEFC, provide crucial assurance by certifying sustainable management practices. Certification is vital for all aspects, including packaging and Trees Outside of Forest (which encompasses agroforestry systems), supporting market credibility and rural economic development.
5. **Resilience through Agroforestry (AF4U):** the AF4U project highlighted agroforestry's role in achieving environmental, social, and productive goals. It defined and monitored practices like Silvo-pasture, Silvo-arable, and Agro-silvo-pasture, and developed essential resources such as a Decision Support Tool (DST) to help farmers optimize business models based on sustainability criteria.

4.2

Workshops and other events

FOREST4EU was actively involved in the **32nd European Biomass Conference & Exhibition (EUBCE)**, a major international event held in Marseille, France, that featured 200 oral presentations and over 500 posters. The project secured a dedicated visibility point in the Exhibition Area, which served as a hub for engaging with attendees and raising awareness about the project's mission. Furthermore, the FOREST4EU project contributed directly to the scientific program with a poster presentation held by Giacomo Mezzetti (ETA). This presentation successfully offered interested participants a comprehensive overview of the project's objectives, activities, and progress, helping to broaden the project's reach within the European biomass and bioenergy community.

Two parallel **Knowledge Transfer Workshops** on November 26, 2024, organized by partners CEKOM (Croatia) and the European Forest Institute (EFI) in Finland. The aim was to facilitate the sharing of best practices and innovative solutions from various European Innovation Partnership Operational Groups (OGs). The CEKOM Workshop (hybrid format) gathered experts from Italy, France, and Germany to discuss best practices in Croatian forestry and agroforestry.



Fig. 6. Attendees online and in-presence at the Knowledge Transfer Workshops

Key topics covered included innovative approaches like using drones and multispectral cameras for forest management, new business models, sustainable management, and financing opportunities. The event specifically involved five Operational Groups: GO-PRI.FOR.MAN, PIF, GO-SURF, Bee Forest, and NEWTON.

The **EFI Workshop (online)** focused on showcasing **innovative EIP Agriculture OG practices** to nearly 30 participants from across Europe. Presentations covered a range of subjects, including the Sustainable Bee Forest concept (Germany), the diversification of edible wild mushroom cultivation (Spain), prefabricated modular construction using Normandy hardwoods (France), and the technical and educational tool, the Digital Marteloscope (BIOSEIFORTE, Italy).

A **third in-person Knowledge Transfer Workshop** on January 30, 2025, organized by partner LWF, with 24 participants. The event was organized as a collaborative effort between LWF, a policy officer from the state ministry for agriculture and forestry, and the EIP-AGRI representative in Bavaria. The workshop highlighted Bavaria's practice-centred, bottom-up approach to EIP-AGRI, emphasizing the **development** and **testing of innovative ideas** directly in collaboration with forestry practitioners. Moreover, three forestry OG innovators from Bavaria presented their projects in a short pitch format: **provision of geodata** for forest owners; **carbon footprint** tracking from forest to end consumer; and **balancing greenhouse gas emissions** in forestry in southeast upper Bavaria. Finally, selected innovations from FOREST4EU were presented online and as a poster session.

FOREST4EU also co-organized the **6th Forest Innovation Workshop**⁴ in Brussels, an essential event that focused on the European framework for innovation in the forest-based sector. The two-day workshop was designed to facilitate crucial knowledge exchange between stakeholders, presenting practical and scientific evidence on the "Forests of the Future" and the broader innovation agenda.

Key activities addressed during the workshop included:

- **Parallel sessions:** dedicated to showcasing innovative, real-world solutions developed by EIP AGRI Operational Groups (OGs) in forestry and agroforestry.
- **Roundtable discussions:** focusing on policy and implementation, with regional authorities discussing innovation priorities and establishing supportive frameworks.

This event was crucial for aligning regional innovation efforts with European strategic priorities, strengthening the knowledge transfer network central to the FOREST4EU project.

⁴ <https://www.forest4eu.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Press-releaseTBP.pdf>



Fig. 7. Pictures from forestinnovation.eu website

FOREST4EU, in collaboration with other EU projects (BBioNets, NUTRI-KNOW, Soil-X-Change, and AQUAGRI-KNOW), contributed to the **online workshop**: “The Future of EIP-AGRI Operational Groups: Challenges, Opportunities and Existing Support Services.” organized by BBioNets ⁵. This three-hour virtual session brought together project teams, Operational Group representatives, experts, and policymakers to conduct a comprehensive discussion on the challenges and opportunities facing the formation and management of EIP-AGRI Operational Groups (OGs).

Key discussion points included:

- Obstacles faced by farmers and producers in setting up and managing OGs;
- The role of facilitators and supporting frameworks across Europe;
- Common difficulties in EU-funded initiatives, such as complex administrative processes and cost-effectiveness challenges;

The workshop successfully underscored the importance of mutual learning and cross-border teamwork, with organizing projects providing concrete illustrations and useful content aimed at fostering the future formation and success of new OGs.

⁵ <https://www.forest4eu.eu/news/eu-cross-fertilisation-joint-workshop-14th-may-2025/>

Another important step was achieved by starting the **B2B event series** on April 15, 2025, to target specific stakeholder's needs to be addressed. Focused on **fostering sustainable construction and supporting local wood industries**, this first meeting featured presentations from Pierre Gautier (Bâtiment Bois de Normandie, France) and Petteri Ryhänen (Lieksan Kehitys Oy LieKe, Finland).

Key Innovation (France): Pierre Gautier presented a post and beam structural system designed to add value to local Normandy hardwood (oak), which is currently exported as a raw material. The highly standardised 3.50 x 6.50 module, built with minimal, industrialized components, specifically targets three- to four-story social housing. The key advantages include:

- **Speed:** components are prefabricated, allowing the assembly of one level per day on-site.
- **Sustainability:** hardwood structures are highly durable, meeting the French RE 2020 standards, and support a "short circuit" economy, ensuring 75% of the total building cost remains local.

Finnish Context: Petteri Ryhänen provided context on the Finnish market, which focuses on softwood and aims to maximize local processing to counter the ineffective export of raw materials. The discussion confirmed that the French system relies on efficient 2D (palletized) component delivery to avoid the high transport costs of fully pre-assembled structures. This cross-border exchange highlighted the shared European objective of maximizing the economic and environmental benefits of local timber resources.



Fig. 8. 1st B2B event banner

As part of the FOREST4EU project, the Latvian State Forest Research Institute (Silava) and the Latvian Logistics Association hosted a **B2B training seminar** focused on **digital innovation in forest management**. Led by project coordinator Dr. Francesca Giannetti (University of Florence), the event provided forestry professionals with **technical expertise in satellite imagery, LiDAR processing, and UAV photogrammetry**.

The curriculum covered the operational use of Sentinel-2 data and multispectral vegetation indices alongside practical applications for drone-based data collection. Attendees included key stakeholders from AS "Latvijas Valsts meži," SIA "Rīgas meži," the State Plant Protection Service, and various private forest owner cooperatives. This successful exchange of knowledge highlighted a strong commitment to using remote sensing tools to enhance forest sustainability and climate resilience across the Latvian forestry sector.

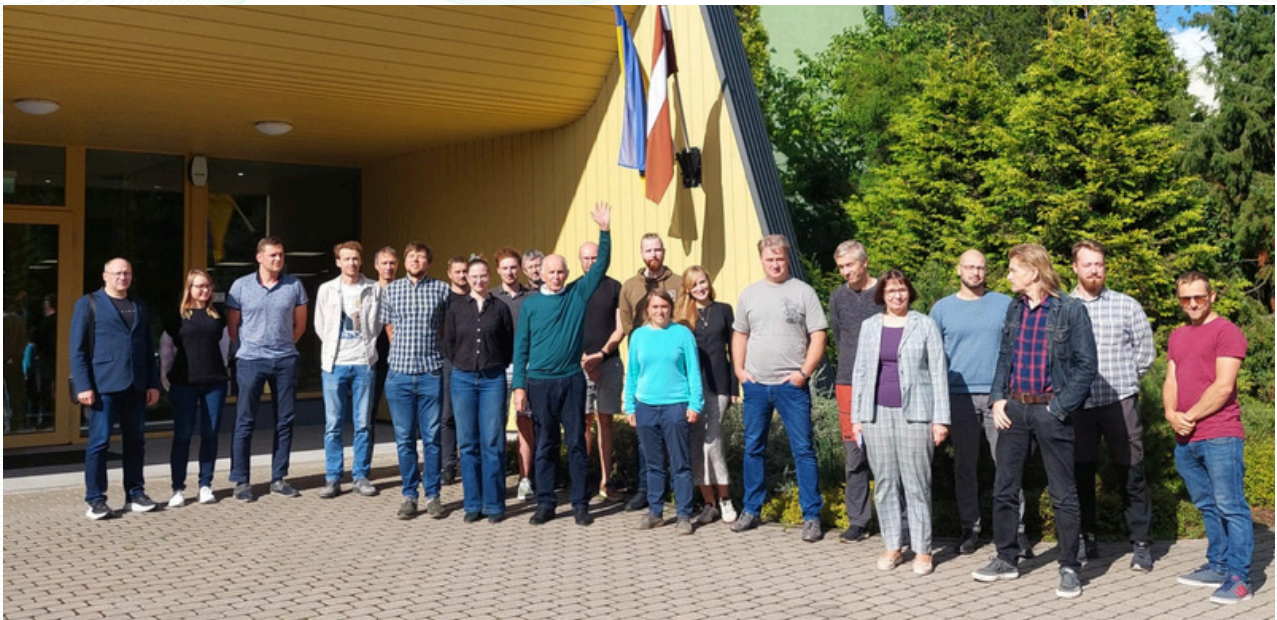


Fig. 9. B2B attendees group picture

4.3

International Study Visits

The International Study Visit in **Portugal** ⁶ (April 22-24, 2025), organized within the framework of FOREST4EU's ITHub 5, set the beginning of these on-site events, and provided project partners and stakeholders with valuable, firsthand experience of successful agroforestry initiatives. The visit focused on the **Portuguese Montado ecosystems**, dominated by cork oak (*Quercus suber*) and holm oak (*Quercus rotundifolia*).

The visit showcased numerous Operational Groups (OGs) and related projects that are addressing key challenges in the region, including:

- **EcoMontadoXXI** (agroecology for cork oak) and Silvpast (silvo-pastoral systems).
- **OakRegeneration** (support for natural oak regeneration) and Platisor (integrated strategies to manage cork oak pests).
- Projects focused on **tree health**, such as **Nutrisuber** (cork oak nutrition) and **GEOSUBER** (vitality monitoring).

The knowledge exchange covered innovative approaches to optimize grazing practices, utilize cutting-edge technologies for tree health monitoring, and develop research-driven strategies for nutrient management and pest control. The insights gained during this visit will directly contribute to FOREST4EU's mission of strengthening the resilience, sustainability, and economic viability of European forest and agroforestry systems through the exchange of practical innovation.



Fig. 10. Attendees during a presentation (portuguese study visit)



Fig. 11. Group picture of participants to the Portuguese study visit

⁶ <https://www.forest4eu.eu/news/report-on-study-visits-22-24-april-portugal/>

The International Study Visit in **Spain** ⁷ (May 6–8, 2025), organized by Cesefor, focused on chestnut cultivation and Non-Wood Forest Products (NWFP), including truffles and pine resin. The event highlighted the strong presence of Operational Groups (OGs) in Mediterranean countries and the need for knowledge transfer to other regions. Key Innovations and Topics:

1. Chestnut Pest and Disease Management:

- **Chestnut Nut Rot (*G. castaneae*):** the **OG INGECA** presented a successful, eco-friendly biological control protocol using *Trichoderma* strains via trunk injection to combat the pathogenic fungus *Gnomoniopsis castaneae*.
- **Chestnut Blight (*C. parasitica*):** discussions addressed the spread of the invasive fungus *Cryphonectria parasitica* and the complex challenges of implementing hypovirulence (mycoviruses) as a biological control measure.



Fig. 12. Attendees introduction (spanish study visit)



Fig. 13. Participants during a field visit

2. Non-Wood Forest Products (NWFP):

- **Truffles:** presentations by **OG Bijou** detailed the use of colorimetric systems and chemical analysis for characterizing high-value products like Burgundy truffles. The **OG Tuber Label** discussed efforts to facilitate the commercialization of black truffles in Spain, aiming to increase low domestic consumption.

- **Pine Resin:** participants toured a pine forest in Villafranca del Bierzo where **Proyecto CARES** is actively working to restore the local resin sector by improving extraction technologies.

3. Cross-Sectoral Innovation:

- A final workshop, including **OG YESweCAst**, explored innovations in waste utilization, such as using a portable shredder to produce biochar or integrating pruning waste into manufacturing boards.

Overall, the visit underscored the critical need for professionalization and multidisciplinary teams within the NWFP sector to balance environmental conservation with technological advancements and economic profitability.

⁷ <https://www.forest4eu.eu/news/report-on-study-visits-6-8-may-spain/>

The International Study Visit in **Slovenia**⁸ (May 27–29, 2025), professionally organized by the Slovenian Forestry Institute (GIS), focused on sustainable forest management, wood mobilization, and the integration of innovative digital tools.

Slovenia is one of the most forested countries in Europe (77% privately owned, highly fragmented). The Slovenia Forest Service (SFS) ensures sustainable, multipurpose, and close-to-nature management, with clear-cutting prohibited since 1947. Challenges include a lack of organization and low engagement among the numerous small-scale private forest owners.

1. Wood Mobilization and Digital Tools:

- The **Operational Group (OG) "Moj Gozdar"** was presented for its multi-tool system designed to support small forest owners and it provides:
 - **Digital Forest Management Plans:** an online platform for plan generation, cost entry, and supply chain management.
 - **Contractor Management:** a multi-level system for assessing contractor suitability and generating draft contracts.
 - **Roundwood Assessment:** a tool for measuring and assessing wood quality to solicit bids.



Fig. 14. Participants at the slovenian study visits introduction to remote sensing with the use of drones (left), and during an Operational Group presentation (right)

2. Decision Support Systems (DSS):

- The **OG PRI.FOR.MAN** was showcased for its DSS that tackles cadastral fragmentation by integrating spatial layers to assess accessibility and exploitation costs.
- The **OG GO SURF** presented a DSS focused on sustainable forest planning, including the estimation of ecosystem services to bolster company-level management.

The visit included a field trip to areas affected by a major forest fire three years prior, highlighting current reforestation efforts (using fire-resistant black pine) and the issue of managing the invasive species *Ailanthus altissima*. A roundtable to summarize key messages and explore future collaborations necessary to advance sustainable forest management and wood mobilization across Europe closed this event.

⁸ <https://www.forest4eu.eu/news/report-on-study-visits-27-29-may-slovenia/>

The three-day International Study Visit in **France**⁹ (June 4–6, 2025), organized by the CNPF, focused on forest adaptation to climate change across three key themes: adaptive silvicultures, new technologies and decision support tools, and transfer, awareness, and communication. Key Innovations and Operational Groups (OGs) are the followings:

1. **Adaptive Silvicultures & Mitigation (Session A):**

- The **FuturForest OG** presented results from testing ten new tree species across 75 plots to assess their adaptability to changing conditions.
- The **CO2 S.For.Marche OG** demonstrated a group certification model for sustainable forest management using Carbon Life Cycle Assessment.
- The **RAISON OG** (visited during the field trip) focuses on understanding the behavior of "atypical" species in Normandy through experimental plots.

2. **New Technologies & Decision Support Tools (Session B):**

- The **BIOSEIFORTE OG** presented the SlideforMAP model for hydrological risk assessment and a digital replica of a Marteloscope.
- The **GO-SURF** project showcased remote sensing tools (e.g., drones) for identifying stressed areas and resilient plants.
- The **SPNA OG** utilized tools demonstrated in the field, including BioClimSol (for assessing climate change risks and afforestation solutions), ARCHI (a visual diagnostic tool for tree decline), and IBP (Indice de Biodiversité Potentielle).

3. **Transfer, Awareness, and Communication (Session C):**

- The **EUROFORNORM OG** emphasized the need for coordinated action and transparency. They developed and presented educational tools like FosterForest and the board game "Foresters, it's your turn to play" to raise public and student awareness of forest management and climate adaptation.

The visit included a final workshop that leveraged the expertise of the AFORCE network to enhance the transferability of innovations and communication strategies among stakeholders.



Fig. 15. Attendees during a field visit in the forest (left) and group picture (right)

⁹ <https://www.forest4eu.eu/news/report-on-study-visits-4-6-june-france/>

The final FOREST4EU Study Visit took place in Calabria ¹⁰, **Italy**, focusing on sustainable forest management and digitalization. Organized by the University of Florence (UNIFI), the visit included institutional greetings from local entities and a tour of the Azienda Agricola “La Foresta” sawmill and surrounding forest areas.

1. PIF (Innovative Plantation in Forestry) – France:

The French project is focused on enhancing the ergonomics and environmental sustainability of forest plantation practices. **Key focuses** include improving working conditions (reducing vibrations/noise for drivers, minimizing musculoskeletal disorders for planters) and boosting seedling survival through mechanical site preparation. **Technological innovations** include testing drones and GPS for accurate site mapping and exploring AI and robotics for plantation assessment and cleaning.

2. Fortrack – Italy (Calabria):

A system designed to digitize forest management and support sustainable practices in the region. Fortrack utilizes GIS, remote sensing, IoT sensors, and AI for real-time monitoring and risk prediction. It features two modules: a Regional open-access Web-GIS platform for general information, and a Corporate module for the complete digitalization of forest management plans for partner companies, enabling continuous updates and advanced analysis.

3. GO SURF – Italy:

Presented by UNIFI, this OG focuses on developing a Decision Support System (DSS) for sustainable forest planning, specifically by estimating ecosystem services to strengthen company-level forest management.

A final roundtable discussion on the visit's last day highlighted two central challenges facing OGs: 1) bureaucracy: The need to shorten and streamline bureaucratic procedures to ensure a smoother process for OG creation and operation; 2) Knowledge Transfer: The importance of better communicating OG results to ensure they are leveraged and continued in future activities and new projects across Europe.



Fig. 16. Group picture (left) and round table discussion (right)

¹⁰ <https://www.forest4eu.eu/news/report-on-study-visits-24-26-june-italy/>

4.4

FOREST4EU project joint final event with ResAlliance

The two-day joint event between the FOREST4EU and ResAlliance projects, successfully hosted by the Competence Centre Ltd. for Research and Development (CEKOM), served as a pivotal, final showcase. This gathering was dedicated to presenting the significant findings and innovations aimed at boosting the resilience and sustainability of Europe's forests and landscapes.

The event provided a unique and essential opportunity for leading experts, stakeholders, and innovators across the forestry and bioeconomy sectors to network and engage in critical discussions. The key focus was on bridging research with practical application to address complex environmental challenges.





Fig. 17. Pictures from the joint final event of FOREST4EU and ResAlliance in Vinkovci, Croatia.

The showcase featured several key components that underscored the projects' impact and future vision:

- **Cutting-Edge Innovations:** the core of the event was the presentation of the latest tools, innovations, and best practices developed by both projects. These covered a range of advanced solutions for sustainable forest management, providing tangible ways to implement the research.
- **Dynamic Networking:** attendees were given a prime opportunity to connect with a diverse group of individuals, including researchers, policymakers, industry professionals, and other stakeholders. This interaction was designed to foster new collaborations and significantly strengthen existing partnerships across Europe.
- **Key Discussions:** dynamic sessions were held, focusing intensely on critical challenges and opportunities facing the sector. Central themes included strategies for climate change adaptation, methods for effective biodiversity conservation, and defining the crucial role of forests in the circular bioeconomy.
- **Future Opportunities:** a forward-looking perspective provided insights into how the project results can be applied to practical work. Furthermore, the discussions explored new business models that can successfully leverage sustainable forestry practices for economic and environmental benefit.

05

Policy Alignment, Network Dynamics, and Enduring Legacy

The findings of FOREST4EU offer profound insights into the real-world motivations and impacts of EIP-AGRI OGs, providing crucial guidance for future policy formulation, particularly in relation to the European Green Deal.

5.1

Drivers of Innovation and Policy Interplay

A detailed analysis of the 175 innovations provided an empirical basis for understanding what truly motivates Operational Groups, and the results demonstrate that the primary drivers are consistently collaborative and non-economic, underscoring the success of the EIP-AGRI model as a facilitator of interactive innovation:

1. **Enhance cooperation: (≥ 90%)** – the ability to bring disparate actors (researchers, practitioners, industry) together to solve common problems;
2. **Improve communication: (≥ 90%)** – establishing transparent, multi-directional channels for sharing knowledge and needs;
3. **Enhance knowledge transfer: (roughly 90%)** – successfully moving research findings into practical, field-level application.

This collaborative spirit is the engine of change. Furthermore, the policy analysis yielded a significant finding: while the spirit of the European Green Deal (EGD) is acknowledged, National level policies (covering forestry laws, national rural development programmes, and specific environmental/biodiversity regulations) are considered more relevant and influential for driving the day-to-day innovation activities of OGs than many of the specific, top-down EGD targets. This highlights the vital importance of ensuring EGD goals are effectively translated and integrated into flexible, incentivizing national and regional frameworks that directly support ground-level projects.

The collected innovations demonstrated a strong and positive alignment with the principles of active and sustainable forest management. When EGD policies were perceived as relevant, they primarily related to enhancing the forest's multifunctionality—specifically its contribution to biodiversity, climate mitigation, and climate adaptation (e.g., increasing forest and tree coverage, promoting resilient species). Conversely, targets perceived as restrictive (such as mandatory limitations on timber harvesting or strict reductions in forest biomass utilization for energy) were often deemed indifferent or inappropriate by the majority of the OGs, suggesting that policy design must find a careful balance between conservation objectives and the need to maintain a viable, active forest bioeconomy.

Stakeholder engagement focused particularly on "professional multipliers"—advisors, forest managers, and association leaders—who possess the leverage to disseminate knowledge across large numbers of end-users. As of May 2024, the comprehensive stakeholder database contained 250 stakeholders, with the highest interest demonstrated in the highly relevant areas of Sustainable Forest Management & Ecosystem Services (ITHub 3) and Adaptation to Climate Change (ITHub 2). The active participation in events like the Policy Focus Groups (PFGs), which register 117 dedicated stakeholders, confirms the successful establishment of a sustainable community designed to continuously link the policy community with the latest field-level innovation research.

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is a critical policy driver for the enabling context of innovation. CAP Pillar II remains the primary funding mechanism for forestry interventions, while agroforestry receives complementary support from both Pillar I (eco-schemes) and Pillar II. However, knowledge and cooperation interventions (Article 77 COOP and 78 KNOW, which include OGs and advisory services) only explicitly mention forestry in a few countries, such as Italy, Austria, Greece, and Portugal.

Despite the overall perceived usefulness of EIP-AGRI funding by many OG members (almost two thirds would recommend it), the implementation process presents significant administrative constraints:

- **Complexity and burden:** the application procedure is generally perceived as difficult, complicated, and time-consuming;
- **Resource and financial constraints:** securing funding is a major challenge, and many OGs required more resources (staff, time, money) than originally planned;
- **Administrative support:** government authorities often provide limited support or advice to OGs encountering difficulties, and delays in processing applications and transferring payments were also frequently reported;

Partnership challenges: difficulties exist in establishing successful multi-actor partnerships, including unclear decision criteria and insufficient support for collaboration, particularly for including research partners whose costs are often only 80% eligible.

The FOREST4EU analysis confirms that innovations in EIP-AGRI OGs related to forestry and agroforestry are primarily focused on technological and process innovations that promote active forest management. While these innovations are closely aligned with national policies for forestry and rural development, they also strategically address EGD goals concerning biodiversity and climate adaptation. The major motivation for innovation comes from both external pressures like climate change and the internal, behavioural drivers like interest in knowledge transfer and inter-actor cooperation.

To fully capitalize on this innovative potential, policy efforts must address the significant administrative barriers encountered by OGs, notably the complexity of the application process and the need for enhanced support and flexibility in project management and resource allocation. Acknowledging the varied regional perceptions and management regimes across Europe is crucial for tailoring future innovation support mechanisms. The results generated by the innovation-policy matrix serve as a vital evidence base for ongoing dialogue with policymakers to improve the user-friendliness of funding schemes and strengthen the impact of forest sector innovation. The overall challenge resembles trying to install a complex, high-efficiency engine (the innovation) into an existing vehicle (the traditional forest sector), where the user manual (the policy framework) needs simplification and the service stations (the administrative support) need modernization to ensure the system runs smoothly and effectively across diverse terrains (the regions of Europe).

The policy analysis carried out within the project lifetime, produced **important reports available on our website:**

- [Policy Briefs](#)
- [Effective knowledge transfer from research and practice to policy makers;](#)
- [Policy Focus Groups general report;](#)

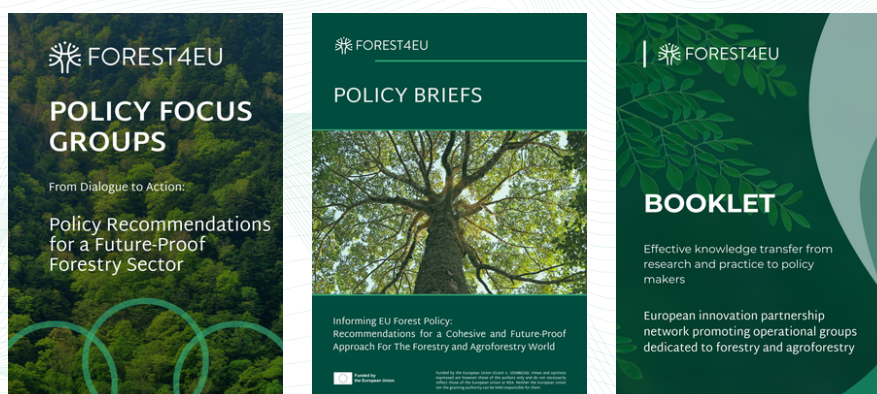


Fig. 18. Visual overview of the project's reports covers

06

Conclusion and Enduring Legacy

The FOREST4EU project has successfully completed its mission, culminating in the creation of a powerful, enduring resource for the European forestry and agroforestry sectors. By diligently collecting and standardizing **175 Practice Abstracts** and disseminating them through the EU-FarmBook and other strategic repositories, the project has established a highly accessible, transnational corpus of practical knowledge.

The legacy of FOREST4EU is one of systemic empowerment. The project has not only captured **localized success stories** but has created the architecture—the methodology, the multilingual resources, the collaborative network, and the strategic policy links—to ensure these **innovations** continue to spread, adapt, and drive resilience. The work stands as a definitive testament to the catalytic role of the EIP-AGRI Operational Groups in translating policy ambition into practical reality.

As the project officially closes in December 2025, the **knowledge transferred** through this partnership network **will remain an active, dynamic resource**, continuing to inform silvicultural decisions, shape supply chain logistics, encourage investment in NWFPs, and ensure that Europe's forests and rural landscapes are managed proactively, sustainably, and profitably for generations to come. The collective effort of FOREST4EU has proven that in the face of immense challenges, the most powerful and sustainable solutions are those built from the ground up, shared across borders, and supported by a unified European network.

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Acknowledgment

This report synthesizes the collective research and deliverables produced by the project partners, as detailed in the bibliography. While generative AI was utilized to manage and summarize the extensive project documentation, rigorous human oversight was maintained throughout the process to refine the AI's outputs and ensure the accuracy of all key concepts and achievements.



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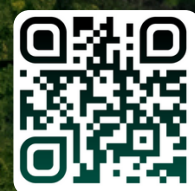
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