

Estonian Fund for Nature, Birdlife Estonia (Estonian Ornithological Society), Estonian Green Movement, Baltic Environmental Forum, Estonian Seminatural Community Conservation Association, Tartu Student Nature Protection Circle, Estonian Students Society for Environmental Protection “Sorex”, NGO Läänerannik, Nõmme Road Society, Estonian Environmental Law Center

To: Mrs Ursula von der Leyen, The President of the European Commission
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Cc: The European Commission Representation in Estonia

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Support to European Green Deal concerning forest management in Estonia

Honourable Mrs Ursula von der Leyen,

I am writing to you in the name of ten Estonian environmental NGOs to express our support for the European Green Deal initiative and its ambitious targets and planned actions (including legally binding EU nature restoration targets) for stopping biodiversity loss and mitigating the climate crisis, including the goals for carbon sequestration and storage. We agree that dealing with both the climate crisis and biodiversity crisis is extremely time critical and a common European legislative framework together with ambitious goals to halt and change the current course are necessary.

We witness with great worry the argumentation of timber industry lobby groups that urges to step back on the Green Deal regarding sustainable forest management and carbon storage goals, stressing on current security situation in Ukraine and the accompanying need to reorganize the energy use in EU to stop the usage of Russian fossil fuels. We want to point out that Estonian forestry sector has become a [carbon emitter already in 2020](#), in contrary to its actual great potential to store it, as almost half of Estonia is forest land; continuation of the current course of logging gravely endangers the Estonian LULUCF sector goals for 2030. Recent evaluation shows that over 50 % of Estonian ecosystems outside nature protection areas are in [poor condition](#). The public support for restricting the current forest management both in terms of volumes and practices used [is evident](#), still the course taken by Estonian Ministry of Environment is [to the contrary](#), turning back the decision of lowering felling volumes. On June 1st, 2022, Council of Estonian Environmental Nongovernmental

Organizations has sent an [appeal](#) to the Prime Minister and the President of the Riigikogu to urge the head leaders of Estonia to be more demanding in addressing climate change and biodiversity loss and to express our views on sustainable forest management.

The situation in Estonia is very similar to the one in Latvia – we share the same reality concerning forestry management and the decisions taken on state level, and thus fully support the concern and position of The Environmental Advisory Council of Latvia in their letter to you sent on May 17th, 2022. Similarly, we urge you to stick to the principles and goals of the European Green Deal, EU Biodiversity Strategy, Forest Strategy and the Restoration Law. The Green Deal is our hope for stopping biodiversity loss and for climate change mitigation and adaptation, for Estonians and Latvians as well as for all the Europeans and as a possible good example for the whole world.

We hereby also emphasize the great need for the legally binding **and ambitious** EU nature restoration targets, as also strongly put forward by [European scientific community](#). We stress that it is with utmost importance that the targets meet the urgency of biodiversity and climate crises, both in their ambition as well as in their implementation speed. We expect the restoration targets to go well beyond currently protected areas and create a movement of restoration that would truly halt biodiversity loss and mitigate climate change. Targets must include the rewetting of peatlands (including in agricultural lands), restoration and recovery of forests, as well as full-scale restoration of grasslands, agroecosystems, freshwater habitats, marine ecosystems and urban ecosystems. It is crucial to tackle the loss of insects, including pollinators. In agroecosystems, maintenance and creation of high-diversity landscape features and species rich grasslands is imperative of food security, as emphasized recently by [European Academies Science Advisory Council](#).

With kind regards,

Tarmo Tüür
Chairman of Executive Committee of Estonian Fund for Nature