

February 1, 2022

Open Letter to the President of Romania, Klaus Iohannis

Dear Mr. President,

The WWF Association welcomes the Romanian President's decision to set up a working group on "Combating climate change: an integrated approach". The issue of climate change is, unfortunately, one of the main problems facing mankind, ranking high on the agendas of the European Commission and of the European Parliament.

As far as Romania is concerned, forests represent the ecosystem with the greatest impact on our efforts to prevent extreme weather events and natural disasters, helping to ensure a clean and healthy environment, as well as to provide new jobs, especially in rural areas.

From this perspective, WWF Romania draws attention to the way in which political leaders understand, through their decisions, to solve the current forest-related problems in our country.

Through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the European Union aims to fulfill, in addition to achieving its agriculture-specific objectives, the countries' environmental and climate objectives, thus allocating funds for this purpose. Therefore, we consider that Romania has the necessary means to overcome the existing, chronic problems in its forests on illegal logging, habitats and species conservation, the superior use of wood, the protection of virgin forests, habitats and species protection, and has an obligation not to lose once again the chance of achieving these goals in the [National Strategic Plan \(PNS\)](#).

Mister President,

The fate of the forests for the next ten years is decided now, when the PNS is drafted. The Romanian politicians must show their support for the protection of forests and for the improvement of climate conditions through proactive solutions that can be funded, according to the European Forestry Strategy for 2030 and of the [Report of the European Court of Auditors](#), only through the CAP.

However, in the proposal for the National Strategic Plan on the CAP for Romania (2023-2027), which is the most important funding source for meeting the objectives included in the [EU Forest Strategy](#), **the authorities have allocated less than 0.8% of the total PNS budget to forests.** As EU member, Romania must meet a number of climate and environment-related goals, which can only be achieved if our country accesses the European funds especially allocated for **payments to forest owners who are subject to restrictions** and which can **provide a fair green transition for local communities** that depend on these natural resources.

Among **the objectives assumed by Romania** are:

- To increase the strictly protected forest areas to at least 10% of its forest area, which is 3-4 times more than we have today, including virgin and quasi-virgin forests.
- To protect 30% of its land, including forests, and to ensure connectivity through trans-European ecological corridors.
- To adopt environmentally-friendly forest technologies and working techniques that are close to the natural processes.
- Superior use of the wood resulting from the forest so that its impact on the environment is minimal and ensures local development within the limits of sustainability.
- To reduce the climate effects on forests and increase the forests' resilience to climatic conditions.

The experience of the last 30 years has taught us that, without these support mechanisms, the **imposing restrictions that are not accompanied by compensatory measures will only turn legal practices into illegal ones and people's activities into criminal acts.**

European institutions such as the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Court of Auditors argue that the **problems regarding climate change and biodiversity conservation can be solved only by financing forests**, by directly involving the decision-makers of each Member State.

Romania currently needs a firm political decision regarding payments for forests within the PNS, in order to meet its climate and environment objectives. Therefore, it is necessary to allocate **minimum 10% of the PNS budget** to forests, funds that are managed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. This money is necessary to cover a series of measures that are mandatory to meet its objectives assumed in front of European citizens and partners.

Given the major importance of forests for Romania's national security, we consider that the involvement of all institutions overseeing strategic economic interests is needed in order to ensure a climate of stability for the most important ecosystems in our fight against the effects of climate change, biodiversity degradation and for rural development.

Orieta Hulea,
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