

Open Letter to the Romanian Government: Forests need at least 10% of PNS' total budget



The fate of the Romanian forests for the next ten years is decided now, when the [National Strategic Plan \(PNS\)](#) is drafted. The Government has to prove its support for forest protection and the improvement of climate conditions by taking proactive solutions which can be financed, according to the European Forestry Strategy, through the Common Agricultural Policy (PAC).

However, in the proposal for the National Strategic Plan regarding PAC (2023-2027), which is the most important financing source to meet the objectives included in the [EU Strategy for forests](#), the authorities have allocated [less than 0.38% of the total PNS budget](#) to forests.

“Without a correct allocation, of at least 10% of the total PNS budget, we will not control illegal logging and unsustainable forest management practices, we will not be able to make the most out of wood and will continue to wonder at the authorities’ inability and at the problems in our forests.” –
Radu Melu, national manager of the forest department at WWF Romania.

As EU member, Romania has to meet certain objectives that can be achieved only if our country accesses the European funds especially allocated for **payments towards forest owners who face restrictions** and which make possible a **fair, green transition for the local communities** that depend on these natural resources.

Some of **the objectives assumed by Romania** are:

- Increase the strict forest protection areas to minimum 10% of the total forests, which is 3 to 4 times more than now. We include here the old growth forests as well.
- Protect 30% of the land surface, including forests, and ensure connectivity through trans-European ecological corridors.
- Adopt an environmentally-friendly forest work technology and working technics that are close to natural processes.
- Superior use of the wood resulted from the forest so that the impact on the environment is minimal and ensures local development within the limits of sustainability.
- Reduce the climate effects on forests and increase forest resilience to climatic factors.

We cannot leave these obligations only on forest owners, refusing to understand their efforts. We cannot ignore the needs of local communities and pretend to meet our goals. The experience of the last 30 years taught us that, without these support mechanisms, **imposing restrictions that aren't accompanied by compensatory measures only turn legal practices into illegal practices and people's activities into criminal acts.**

Without European financing, illegalities in the woods will continue

More and more people are worried about the forests' fate in Romania. The theme of illegal logging, of the aggressions against forestry staff and of the fight against climate change has rightly attracted the public opinion attention, which wants to solve these problems efficiently and sustainably.

Forests have constantly been ignored and bypassed by the Romanian officials when it came to financing them with European money ever since Romania joined the EU. Although these funds are also intended for forests, their financing has always been postponed and ridiculed. **Forests count for 29% of Romania's territory, but their financing through rural development policies has never exceeded 1% of the money allocated to our country.**

European institutions such as the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Court of Auditors claim 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.

All the efforts made so far to regulate the forestry activity, to draw public attention towards the importance of the forest and to point out irregularities become useless if we don't understand the need for real financing of the forests. Without these European funds, Romania will continue to be pointed at in the European Union as a country of controversy, with extremely valuable forests that pay an annual tribute of indolence and disregard to those who should protect them: the state authorities.

Photo: WWF Romania / Mihai Constantineanu