

# SOCIAL BENEFITS OF FORESTS



Forests are a major source of benefits for the society.

## EMPLOYMENT



Almost **4 million people** in Europe earn their living from working in forestry and forest-based industries.

The forest sector offers great potential to provide **new job opportunities** and income for **rural households**: this might help to counter the loss and aging of the population in rural areas.

Overall, there are on average almost **4 workers per 1,000 hectares**, though this number varies throughout Europe, depending on different factors, such as the mechanization of forestry operations.



**25% of all people employed** in forestry in Europe are **50 years old or over**.



The recruitment of new, younger workers into the sector is a challenge to be addressed.



Across Europe, **women** only account for **25%** of the overall **workforce** employed in forestry.



Over the last 20 years, **the number of highly-qualified employees has increased**.

## Occupational health and safety



Annually, about **1 in 10** workers in the sector suffers from an accident, and about **200** people are killed in forestry work in European countries (not including the Russian Federation).



Improving the occupational health and safety situation in the forest sector remains a **challenge**.



## SOCIAL WELFARE

Forests are a major resource for social welfare:

Forests protect us and our infrastructures (roads, railways, settlements, buildings, etc.) against natural and human induced hazards (such as avalanches, floods, landslides, and rock falls).

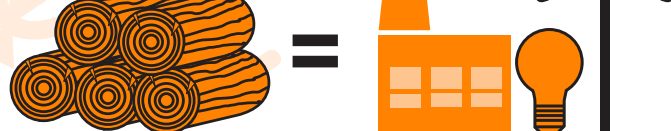


Forests provide us with wood for a wide range of uses and many other goods.



Forests provide us with energy: In 2007, wood energy contributed **2.5%** of the final energy consumed in all Europe.

**Woody biomass is the most important single source of renewable energy in Europe:** wood accounts for almost as much energy as hydro, wind, solar, geothermal, municipal and industrial waste and other biomass put together.



Forests offer us countless opportunities for recreation: At least **90%** of the forests in Europe are **accessible to the public** for recreational purposes.



And the benefits to health (physical and mental) provided by forests are innumerable.



## CULTURAL VALUE



We can't forget about the **cultural and spiritual values** of forests:

- They are a source of artistic inspiration.
- They are a backdrop for myths and stories.
- They provide places to learn about nature and ourselves.

In Europe, around **1 million sites** with cultural and spiritual values have been recorded within forests, of which **75%** are classed as "Cultural heritage".

Among the cultural heritage sites recorded for forest in Europe there are, for instance, **237,927** trees with cultural and spiritual values.



**Forest Europe** growing life  
Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe

Source: FOREST EUROPE, UNECE and FAO 2011: State of Europe's Forests 2011. Status and Trends in Sustainable Forest Management in Europe. [http://www.forest-europe.org/full\\_SoEF](http://www.forest-europe.org/full_SoEF)