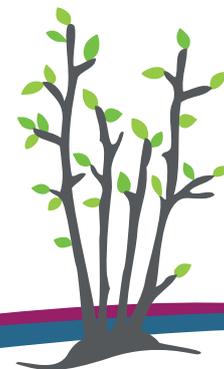


Coppice forests in Europe: A valuable and sustainable natural resource



POLICY PAPER

COST Action FP1301 EuroCoppice

Innovative management and multifunctional utilisation of traditional coppice forests – an answer to future ecological, economic & social challenges in the European forestry sector

Executive Summary

Coppice is the oldest form of sustainable forest management and is still abundant throughout Europe today. Its unique characteristics contribute to rural livelihoods, the bio-economy, environment and cultural heritage. Coppice forests have become neglected in recent history, leaving an enormous untapped potential. Experts from 35 countries, involved in COST Action FP1301 “EuroCoppice”, urge EU policy-makers to seize this opportunity by specifically addressing and supporting coppice within EU strategy, policy, R&D programmes, and structural funds.

Coppice Forests in Europe

Over **20 million hectares** across Europe are managed as coppice, while a much larger area originates from past coppice management. It is the **oldest form of systematic and sustainable forest management** and was developed to supply rural communities and early industries with wood, **mainly for fuel**.

In the early 20th century the prevailing concept for the management of forests **shifted to “high forest”**. This was mainly due to a rise in the use of fossil energies, through which fuelwood became less important. Another factor was an increased need for large dimension construction wood, which is more easily produced in high forests. Consequently, many coppice forests were **converted to high forests or abandoned**. The rate and intensity of these changes depended on the local conditions of industrial development and market demand.

Thus, today a **large regional variation** of coppice forests exists in terms of distribution, structure, legal status and management. Likewise, **diverse products and services** are supplied by coppice.

What are the Benefits of Coppice?

Coppice forests have unique characteristics that make a valuable contribution to society, economy and the environment:

- **Rural livelihoods** – regular income, sustainable employment and resources
- **Low-carbon bioeconomy** – renewable, sustainable, environmentally friendly biomaterials and fuels
- **Protective function** – mitigates soil erosion, rockfall, landslides and avalanches
- **Sharing economy** – community use & recreation
- **Provision** – timber and non-timber forest products
- **Enrichment** – biodiversity and cultural landscapes

High forest consists of trees that are left to grow a long time; they originate from seed

Simple coppice is harvested frequently on rotation; shoots regrow from the stump

Coppice with standards is a mix between simple coppice and high forest

Short Rotation Coppice (SRC) is harvested more frequently; it is an agricultural crop

Coppice is harvested at **frequent intervals** and **sustainably supplies wood** at a **low cost**. This management is **highly efficient** at producing large amounts of wood in a short time. Coppice forests provide **unique habitat features** that benefit a large variety of vegetation and wildlife, thus contributing to biodiversity. The existence of coppice forest and its future **depends on human management**.

What is the Issue?

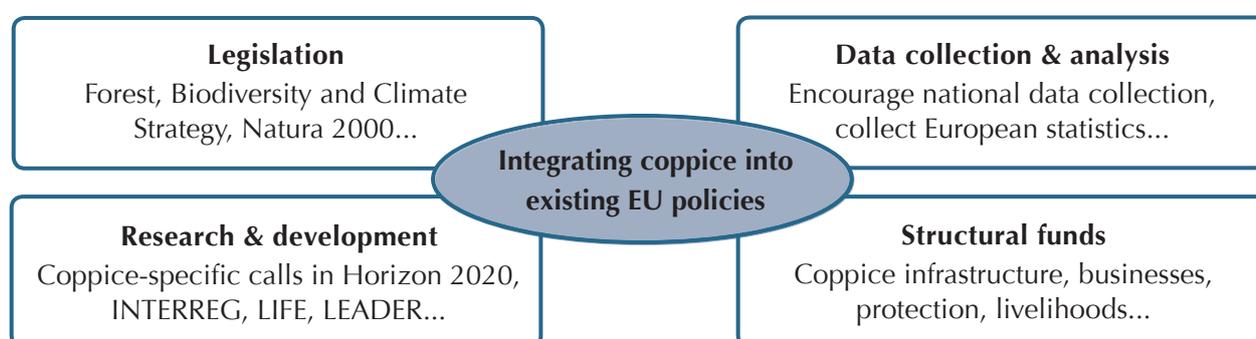
Coppice is hardly recognised or addressed in EU policy. It is also neglected and even opposed in many national policies. In consequence, reliable data on coppice is scarce and knowledge on coppice is diminishing in both science and practice.

The continued neglect of the coppice resource is a lost opportunity for European development.

Policy Recommendations

A European approach and harmonised action is essential to unlock this potential!

To achieve this aim, coppice must be reinstated at an EU level:



Awareness for and implementation of the policies **are the responsibility of EU Officials, national forest-related organisations and NGOs**; particularly those related to the following European Commission DGs:

- Agriculture and Rural Development
- Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
- Environment
- Climate Action
- Energy
- Eurostat – European statistics

Policy makers and environmental professionals are urged to seize this opportunity and reinstate coppice forest management at both national and European level.

EuroCoppice - COST Action FP1301 (2013 - 2017) brought together over 150 experts, researchers and practitioners from 35 European and partner countries to collect and analyse information on coppice forests and their management. Special emphasis was given to technical and economic methods that provide ecological services and sustainable products from coppice forests, all the while considering the effects on rural development, growth and job creation.

* For more information visit: www.eurocoppice.uni-freiburg.de

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Further Contacts: EuroCoppice initiated a long-term platform for coppice-related topics within IUFRO (www.iufro.org), the global organisation for forest research: Working Party 01.03.01 "Traditional coppice: ecology, silviculture and socio-economic aspects". Coordinator: Valeriu-Norocel Nicolescu, nvnicolescu@unitbv.ro

COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) is a pan-European intergovernmental framework. Its mission is to enable break-through scientific and technological developments leading to new concepts and products and thereby contribute to strengthening Europe's research and innovation capacities. www.cost.eu

