



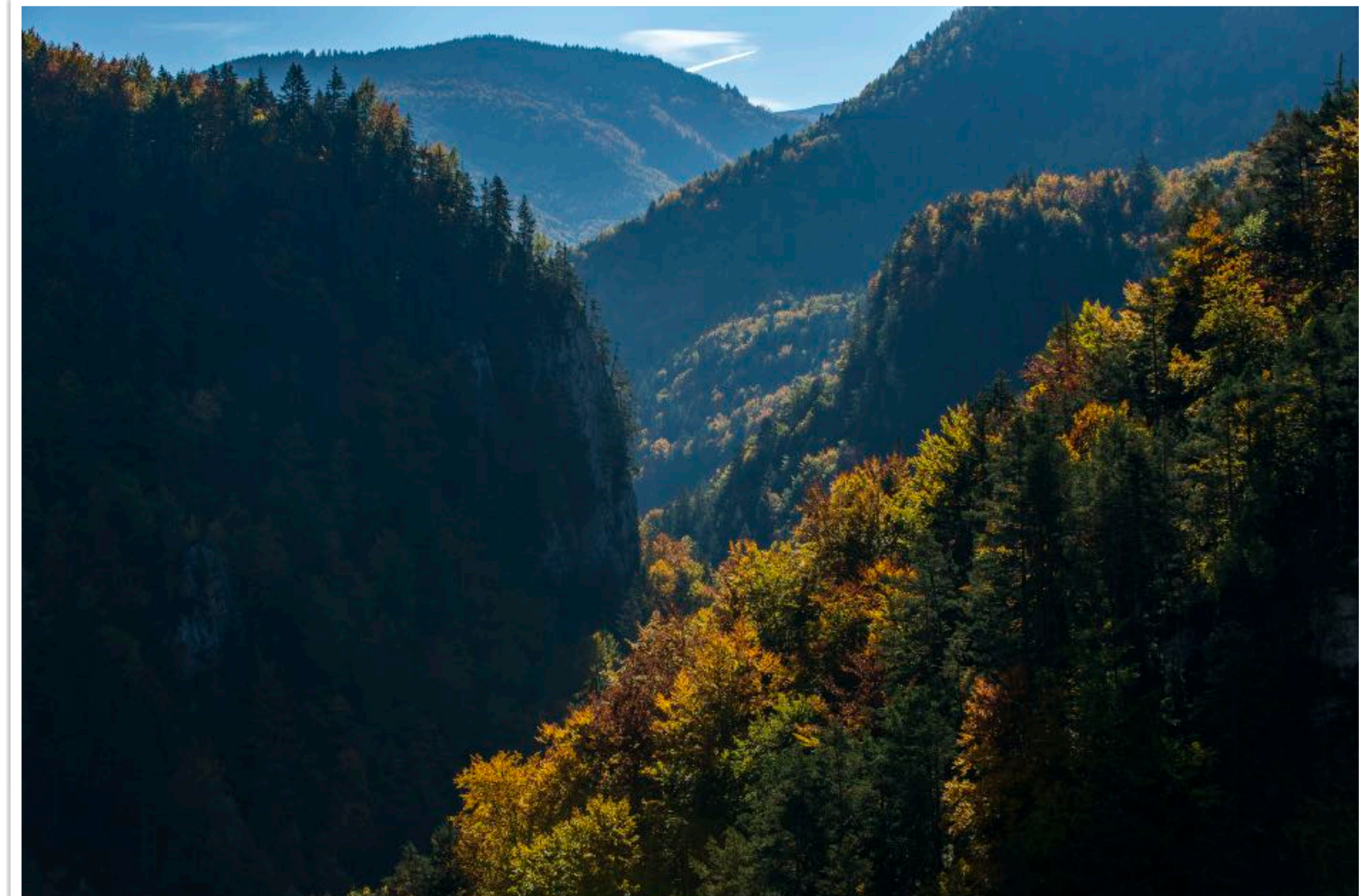
# **EU policies influencing the protection of old-growth forests**

**Reflecting on the outcomes of CBD COP15**

**Zoltan Kun, WCPA member, Head of Conservation, Wild Europe Foundation, 29/11/2022**

# Presentation outline

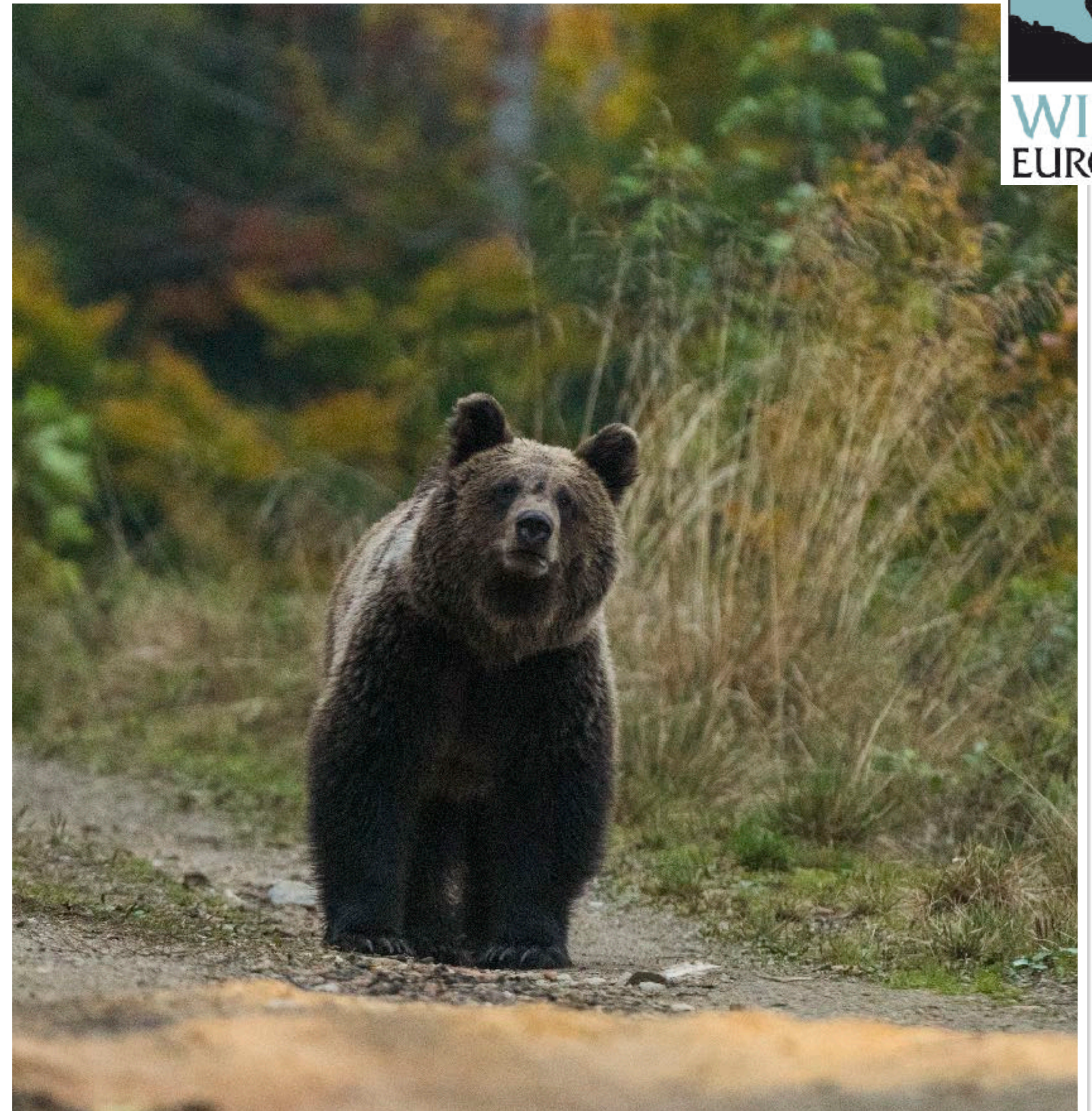
- personal & organisation introduction
- relevant EU policies with link to CBD
- IUCN resolution
- Examples & Lessons learned
- funding
- concrete actions for Czech Republic
- Q&A



# Introduction

## Wild Europe Foundation

- Started as a cooperative initiative amongst dozens of organisations
- Focus on wilderness, rewilding, forests and wetlands
- Foundation since 2022
- Personal
  - Forester, landscape architect
  - WCPA / CEM member
  - One of the founders of European Wilderness Society



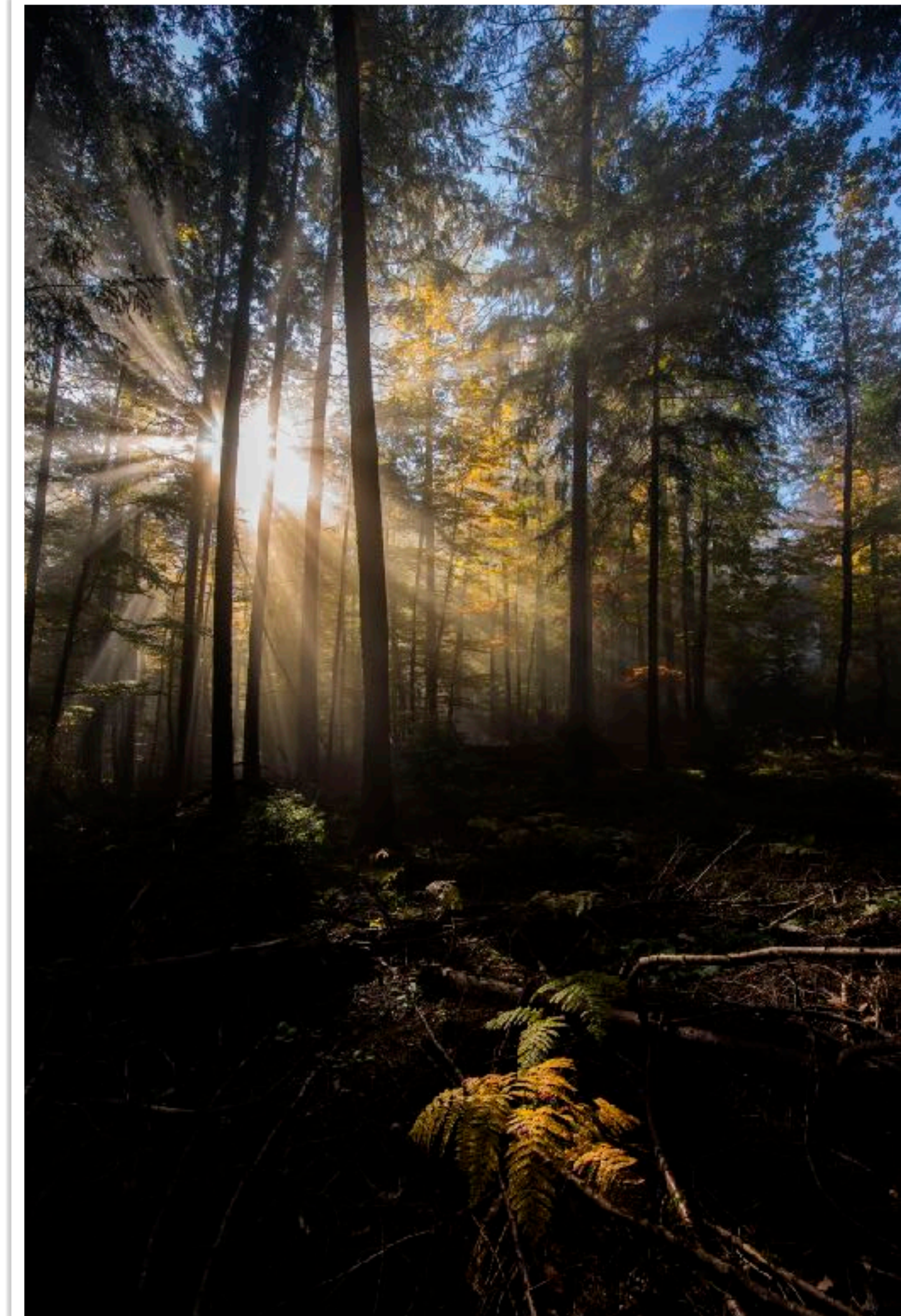
# Conference in Bratislava for an OGF Protection Strategy in 2019

- Preparatory consultation
- 148 registrations, 28 countries
- EC, UNESCO, Council of Europe  
IUCN, governments
- Multi-sector representation
- Range of specialists
- Collective input to Strategy



# Key elements of the Strategy

- Definition structure
- Mapping & EWS framework
- Practical protection initiatives
- Policy and law gaps
- Funding and incentives
- Communication & representation



# Old-growth forest definition

## Europe vs EU



- Practical guidelines for definition structure which can be used throughout Europe
- <https://www.wildeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/OGFPrimary-Forest-271120.pdf>
- Action plan
- <https://www.wildeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Wild-Europe-Summary-Action-Plan.pdf>



# Kunming-Montreal document - COP15



- CBD Aichi Target aimed at 17% terrestrial protection
- CBD COP15 provides a new framework that is largely echoed in the EU policies
  - 30 by 30
  - Restoration of 30% degraded land
  - Natural ecosystems
  - Payments for ecosystem services
  - Nature-based Solutions
  - Perverse subsidies
  - *No agreement on linking biodiversity and climate crises*



# EU policy context (1)

- The CBD post 2020 biodiversity framework in the so-called zero draft included: 30% protection (both terrestrial and marine) with 10% strict protection
- EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 adopts the ambition of CBD and indeed talks about
  - 30% terrestrial protection
  - 10% strict protection (non-intervention / wilderness)
  - Calls for a binding Restoration Law and Target
  - 25.000 km free flowing river restored, and
  - **Urgent protection of all remaining primary and old-growth forest in EU**





# EU Biodiversity Strategy

## Old-growth forests receive special attention

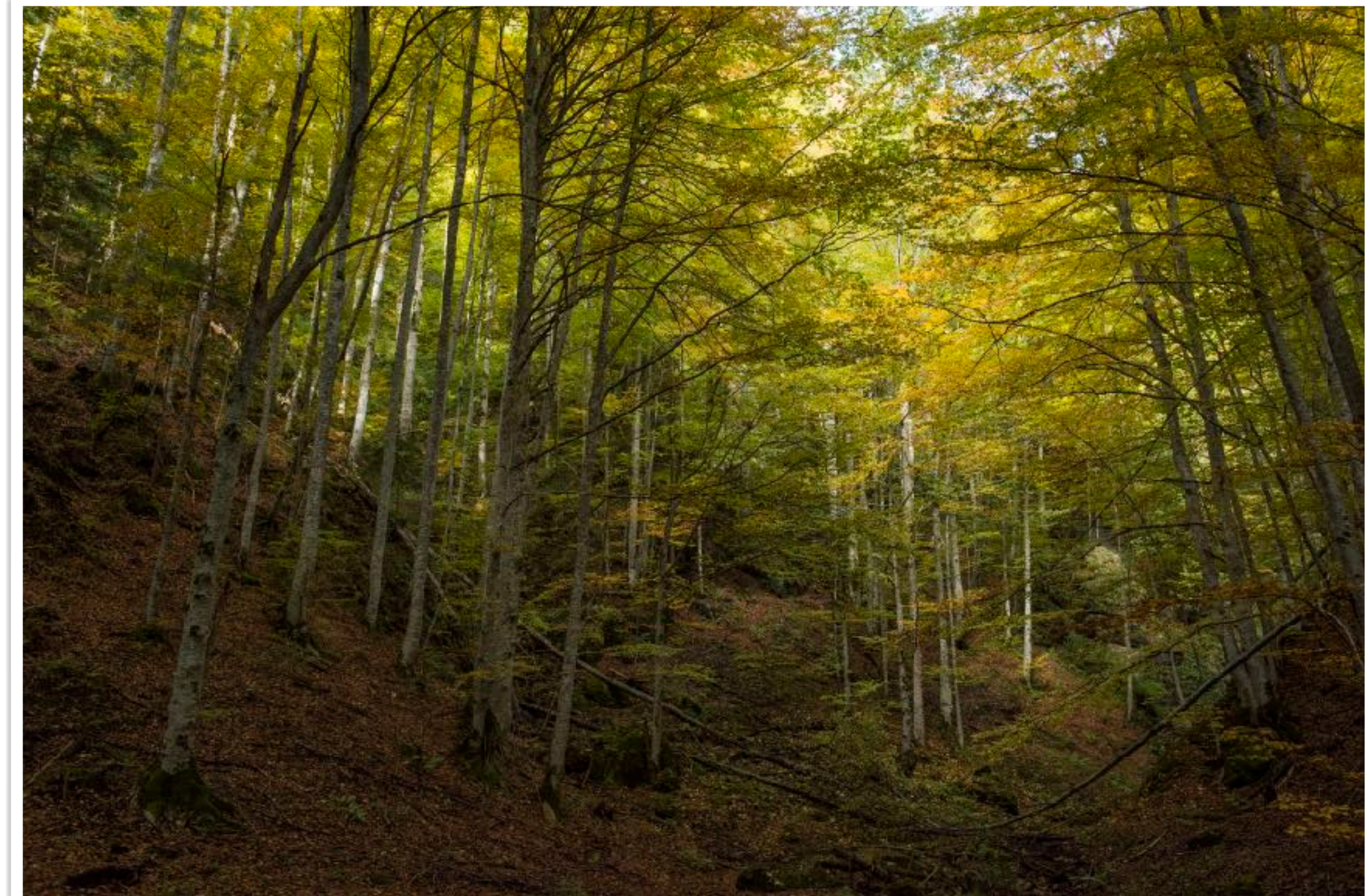


- All OGF requires protection
- Strict protection meaning non-intervention
- Improve forest monitoring - we need to increase our knowledge
- EU Nature Restoration Law with the inclusion of forest habitats
  - 2-3% -> 15%
  - What to do during the Swedish EC Presidency (competence discussion)



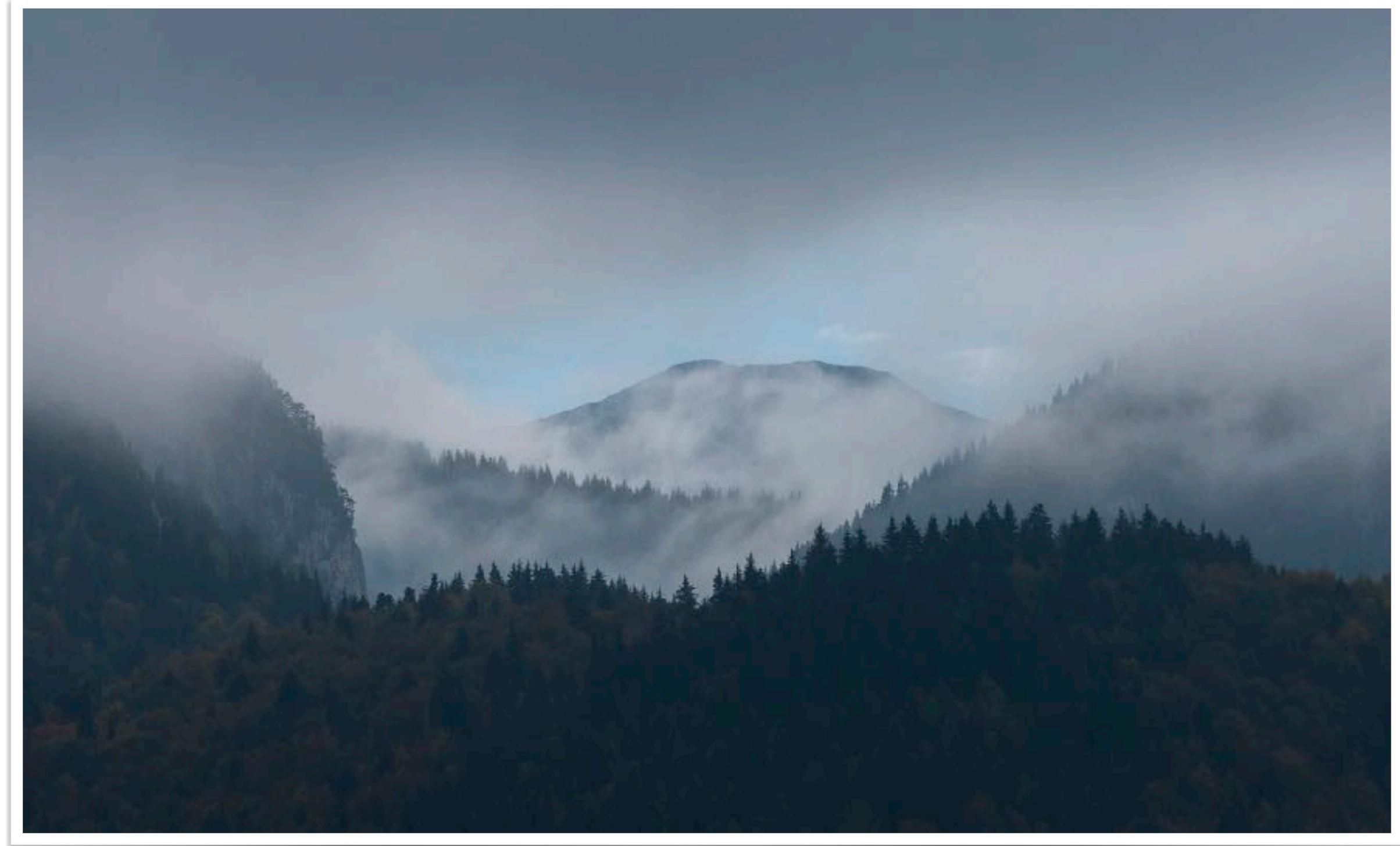
# EU policy context (2)

- The EU sets ambitious targets beyond the biodiversity strategy
- EU Green Deal
  - The EU will provide financial support and technical assistance to help those that are most affected by the move towards the green economy. This is called the Just Transition Mechanism. It will help mobilise at least €100 billion over the period 2021-2027 in the most affected regions
- EU Climate Neutral by 2050 which is a strong incentive to (a) protect (and increase) existing carbon storage in various land use categories (forests) and (b) increase carbon removal from the atmosphere -> the role of old-growth forests & lack of CBD nexus document



# EU policy context (3)

- EU Forest Strategy
  - Monitoring law
- EU Forest Degradation law
  - Degradation in EU
- Nature laws
  - Habitats directive
  - Forest & Natura 2000 technical report update
- New forest governance system
- Other interesting law
  - Carpathian Convention: although framework convention but the protocols might be enforced



# IUCN World Conservation Congress



- IUCN members adopted Resolution 127 in Marseilles (based on Wild Europe 2018 Protection Strategy).
- Strengthening the protection of primary and old-growth forests in Europe and facilitating their restoration where possible
- Calls for
  - Closing the gaps in the mapping of old-growth forests
  - Setting strict protection as default management
  - Prohibiting timber sourcing
  - Protection & Restoration
- Source: IUCN portal



**IUCN**  
WORLD  
CONSERVATION  
CONGRESS  
*Marseille*

# Policies / negotiations to be influenced



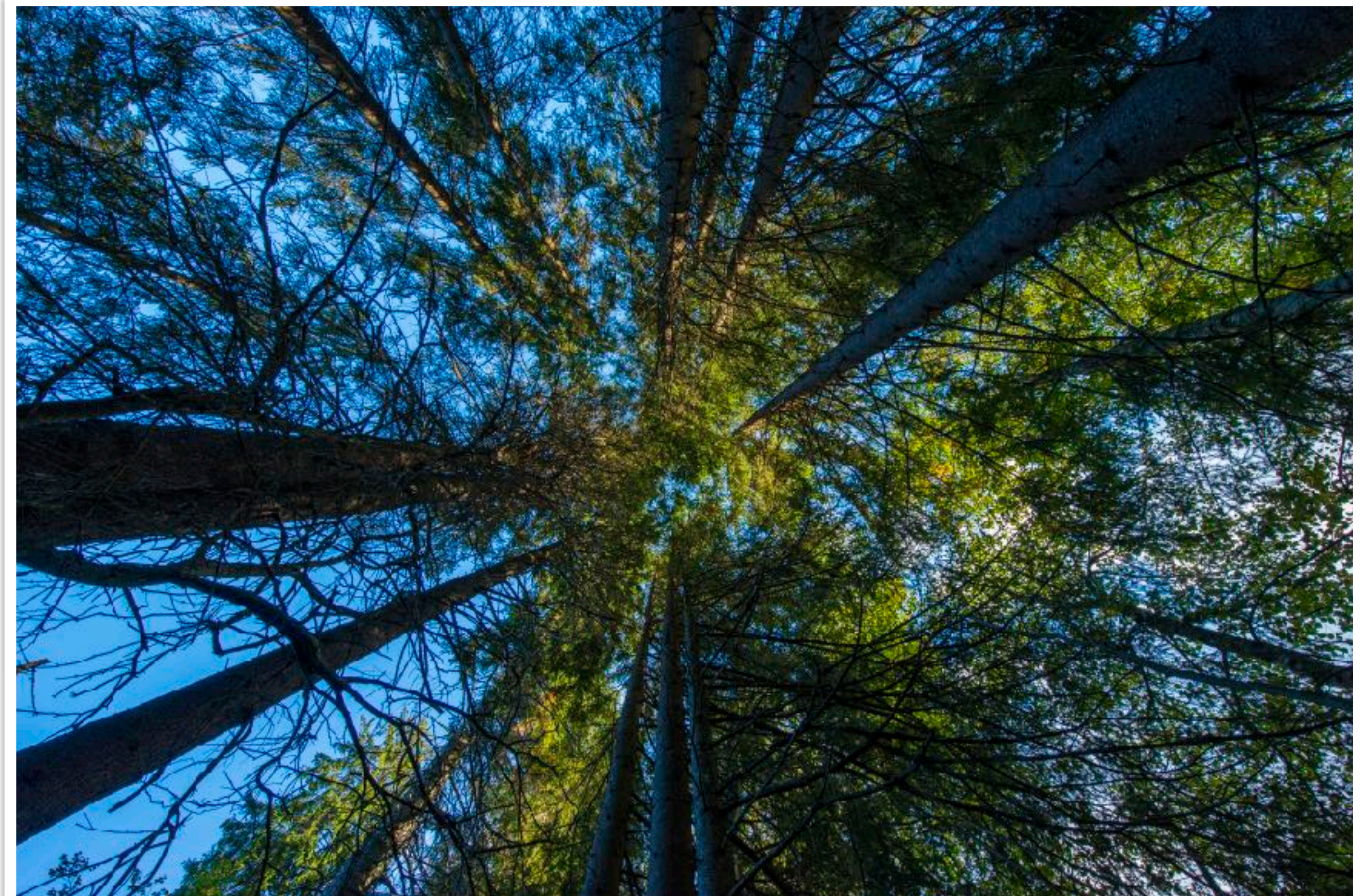
- EU Forest Strategy is still under discussion
- Implementation of EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 including definitions of primary & old-growth forests, and of strict protection, etc...
- Renewable Energy Directive & LULUCF still being determined
- EU Nature Restoration Law (Nexus Strategy)
- Outcomes from UNFCCC COP27 and CBD COP15



# What negotiation opportunities exist



- Wild Europe one of 5 conservation NGOs in the EU Working Group on Forest and Natura 2000
- New Forest & Forestry Stakeholder group
- Active cooperation with large NGO networks: Forest Movement Europe, Environmental Paper Network, Forest Defenders Alliance
- Implementation of the IUCN resolution through its members



# Examples to learn from

- Natura 2000 network is the EU mechanism for biodiversity and this can allow funding utilisation
- Belgium's new prioritised action framework suggests establishing 10.000 hectare wilderness area with a financial compensation mechanism (125 EUR/ha) for land owners
- Austria considers forests protection as a priority to reduce risks of natural disturbances (avalanche risk reduction) in order to safe economy and human life
- Germany established a wilderness fund to purchase land for creating new non-intervention forests
- Hungarian Constitutional Court decision on the impact of clear cutting

# Romania – the FCC initiative

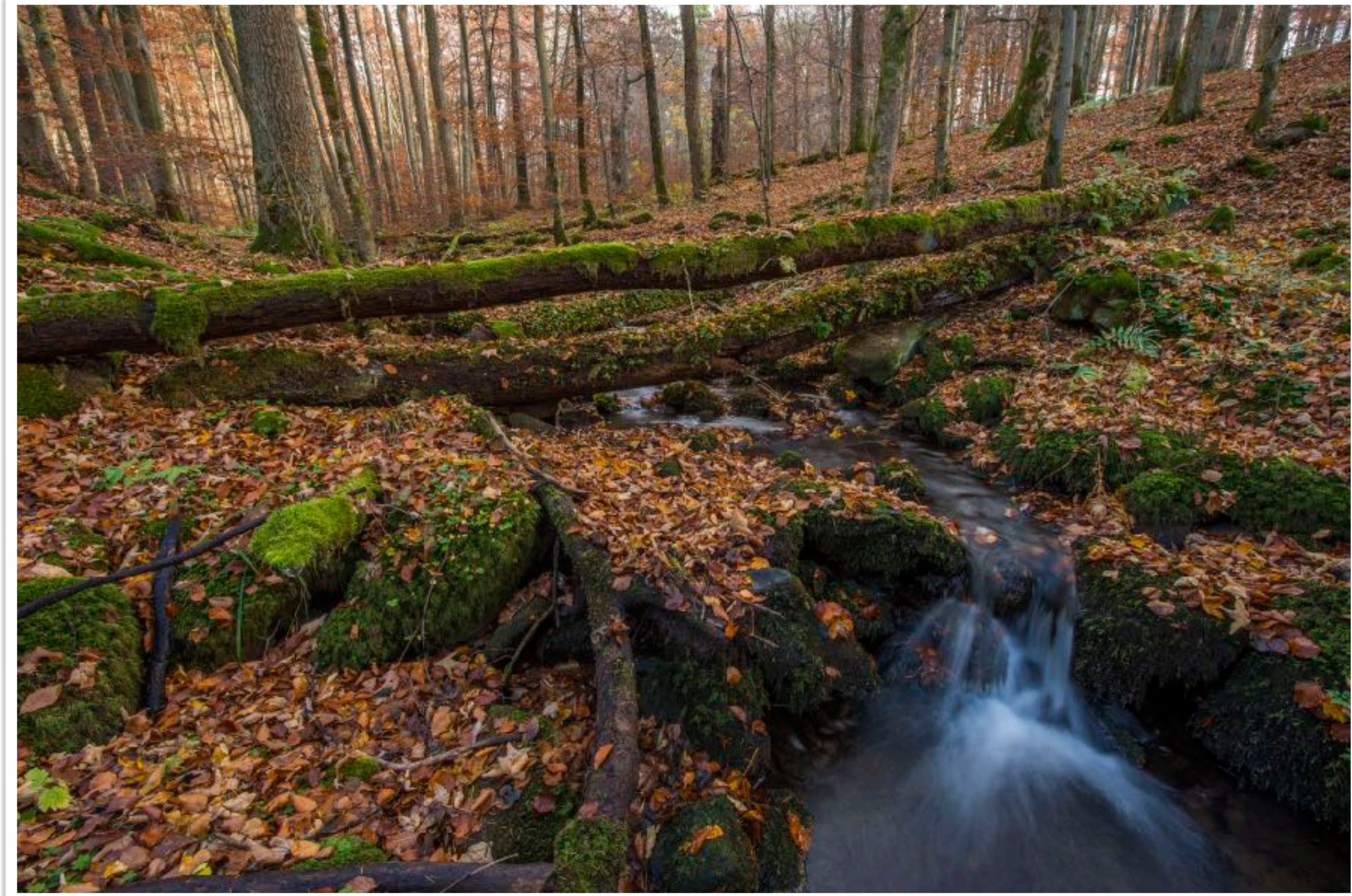
- Growing value as OGF icon for European conservation
- Inspiration of scale and vision
- Community enterprise
- Potential PES-VCO project
- Romanian National Park as model
- Helped raise 5 million ELP funding
- Clima Carpathia?





# Lessons learned – what to avoid

- ERDF funding used to increase fragmentation of forests through financing the building of new and renovation of old forest roads
  - Recommendation: don't allocate EU funds for further decrease of forest health
- The use of forest biomass as renewable energy increases the pressure on our forests (over 50% of all timber harvest is burned in Europe, 60% of renewable is based on biomass)
  - Recommendation: stop subsidising the burning of forest biomass



# Funding needs

- Why is funding needed for non-intervention / wilderness management?
  - Law enforcement
  - Research
  - Monitoring
  - Visitor management
  - Interpretation services
  - Restoration
  - Dealing with invasive (and potentially with high number of herbivores)



# Funding opportunities



- Land purchase or allocation: ERDF can help compensating land owners
- Restoring wilderness attributes: LIFE+ grants (with national co-financing) can be used for conservation projects
- Conservation planning: INTERREG funds might be used for improving stakeholder cooperation, developing guidelines and management plans
- RRF?



# Research opportunities

- Horizon Europe project proposal submission to the call on *Conservation and protection of carbon-rich and biodiversity-rich forest ecosystems*
- Encouraging international cooperation (and includes EU's outer territories, tropical forests)
- Utilise the newly developed research network



# Example of a research project - Griffith University with University of Life Sciences



- Arranging presentations to leading EU policy makers to influence EU Biodiversity Strategy and Forest Strategy
- Distribution of research on carbon and other ecosystem service benefits to EC / European Parliament, etc....
- Mapping of remaining old-growth and primary forests in Europe (confirmed and likely) -> used by EU Joint Research Centre
- Established a wide network of committed researchers -> EU Horizon Europe project submission on rewilding



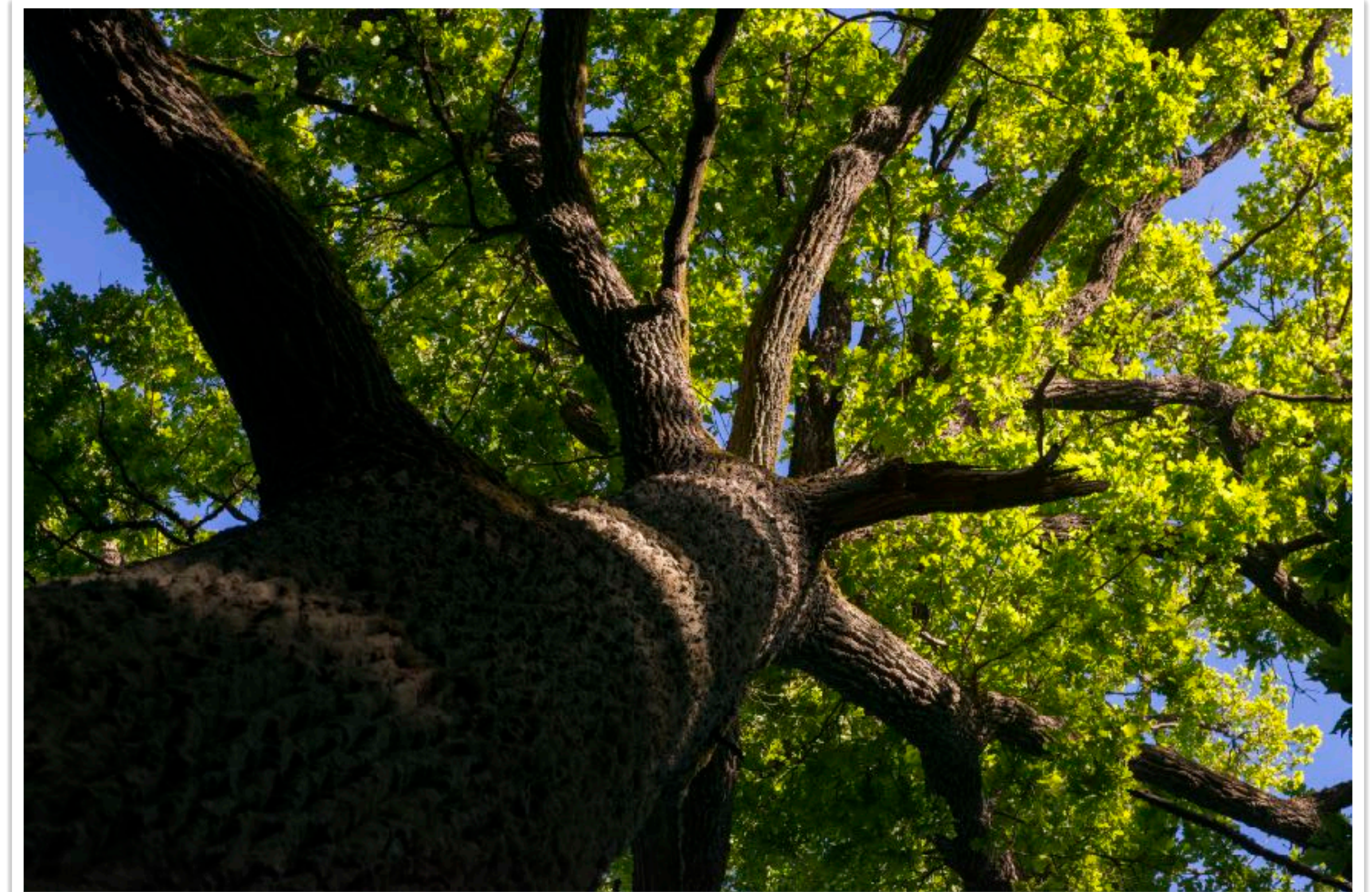
# Other opportunities on EU level

- The European Commission started various initiatives which are relevant to us:
  - Payment for Ecosystem Services
  - Certification of Carbon Removal
  - Mapping and Assessing Ecosystem Services with reference to UN SEEA Ecosystem Accounting



# Implications in Czech Republic

- EIB is to become a climate bank which can turn into a potential funding source for wilderness protection
- The Czech Prioritised Action Framework should allocate EU funds for wilderness protection in Natura 2000 sites
- Czech Republic can further the creation of practical examples of payments for ecosystem services (eg. Carbon payments which consider the true social price of carbon)
- National Restoration Plan



# Implementing the OGF Strategy in Czech Republic



- Identification of threatened OGF areas
- Adopt on OGF definition
- Input to best practice on national policy and legislation
- Funding & general support





# Discussion items

## What actions are needed to implement the EU Biodiversity Strategy commitment

- Research activities (good cooperation with the University of Life Sciences in Prague)
- Restoration of ecosystem integrity / forest naturalness
- Policy changes on a national level
- Engagement with the relevant stakeholders
  - Definition of stakeholders
- Funding
  - Payment for ecosystem services
  - Getting private forest owners or
  - Focus on state owned land



# Questions & Answers



**Thank you!**

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