

## Trends

The forest area in Europe expanded by 19.3 million ha over the last 30 years. On average, Europe's forest area increased by 643 thousand ha (0.30%) per year from 1990 to 2020. The presented changes in forest area are net changes and are the combined results of afforestation, natural forest expansion and deforestation. On average, all European regions continuously gained forest area over the last 10 and 30 years, although the rate of gain is decreasing. With an annual increase of 218.5 thousand ha (0.78%) over the last 30 years, forest expansion was highest in South-West Europe, followed by South-East Europe at 1476 thousand ha (0.38%) and Central-West Europe at 131.5 thousand ha (0.36%) per year (Figure 1.1-3 and Table 1.1-3).

For all European regions, the average annual increase in forest area was higher during the period 1990-2020 (643 thousand ha in Europe's forests) than in the period 2010-2020 (443.9 thousand ha). This indicates that the intensity of forest expansion has decreased in all regions in recent years, and consequently there is an overall decline in the expansion rate at the European level.

The total forest area expansion for the period 1990-2020 is highest in Spain at 155.6 thousand ha per year, France at 93.9 thousand ha per year, and Turkey at 81.2 thousand ha per year. The annual rate of change

expressed as a percentage of the total forest area is highest for Iceland (3.74%), Ireland (1.77%) and Spain (0.97%) for the period 1990-2020 (Figure 1.1-4), and for Iceland (1.40%), Ireland (0.82%) and Denmark (0.69%) for the period 2010-2020.

For a few countries the reported data indicate a net decrease in forest area (Portugal, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Sweden) throughout the period 1990-2020. Netherlands, Slovenia, Sweden, Belgium, and Cyprus reported a decrease for the period 2010-2020.

The trend for FAWS is slightly different from the general increase in the forest area. In North Europe, the FAWS decreased on average by 116 000 ha per year for the period 1990-2020 (Table 1.1-4). But again, the decrease was higher in the period 1990-2010 than in the period 2010-2020. All other regions reported an increase in the area of FAWS for both time periods. Central-East Europe is the only region where the annual increase was higher in 2010-2020 than in 1990-2020. All over Europe, nine countries reported a decrease for the period 1990-2020 and period 2010-2020. The decrease of FAWS may be related to the extension of areas subject to environmental (such as the extension of protected areas), economic or social restrictions, while an increase of FAWS is rather related to the overall increase of forest area.

**Table 1.1-3: Forest area and annual change in forest area, by region, 1990-2020 and 2010-2020**

Region	1990	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	Annual change 1990-2020	Annual change 2010-2020
	1 000 ha						%	
North Europe	69 943	70 823	70 767	70 926	71 202	71 299	+0.06	+0.05
Central-West Europe	35 020	36 382	37 178	37 864	38 447	38 966	+0.36	+0.29
Central-East Europe	41 731	42 773	43 280	43 841	44 471	44 735	+0.23	+0.20
South-West Europe	24 910	28 760	30 162	30 841	31 176	31 466	+0.78	+0.20
South-East Europe	36 459	37 339	38 210	39 442	40 196	40 887	+0.38	+0.36
EU-28	147 971	154 754	157 592	159 673	161 413	162 422	+0.31	+0.17
Europe	208 062	216 077	219 597	222 914	225 493	227 353	+0.30	+0.20

Note: Data coverage as % of total regional forest area: 100%; data cover all countries, for those not reporting on the year 2020 the last available information was used.