



THE EUROPEAN WOODWORKING AND SAWMILL INDUSTRIES

MANIFESTO

2024-2029 political term

Responsibly sourced wood products

are not only a healthy and functional part of our everyday lives they are also renewable, store carbon and have low-carbon footprints. Our products are designed with circularity in mind allowing for reuse, recycling or recovery for energy production. Wood products also contribute to rural and regional economies – providing jobs, recreational spaces and economic value – while supporting healthy and resilient forests.



A strong wood products manufacturing sector in Europe is essential to achieving key EU open strategic priorities including environmental goals, fostering innovation, enhancing competitiveness, creating jobs, maintaining recreational/ tourist spaces and responding to evolving consumer preferences. The European wood industries contribute to a more sustainable and resilient

economy that aligns with the principles of environmental stewardship and responsible business practices. The wood sector proudly works with one of the few renewable sustainable raw materials which is abundant in Europe thereby contributing to reinforcing European open strategic autonomy and security of supply amid an increasingly volatile geopolitical environment.

In the framework of the next political mandate 2024-9 the European woodworking value chain asks policy makers to prioritise the following actions in order to achieve a green, cost-efficient, competitive and resilient EU economy:

1

Undertake a science-based impact climate and environmental assessment prior to developing any new legislation that directly, indirectly or potentially effects the availability of wood resources from the forest. In line with this request it is important to:

- a. assess the *cumulative* effect of legislation related to the supply of raw wood materials and consequent multiple economic impacts including on employment and living in remote rural areas
- b. agree that targets for the carbon sink of forests cannot be used to offset emissions from fossil-intensive sectors especially if this results in a reduction of raw material supply for the wood products industry
- c. nominate the Secretariat General as the DG responsible for policy coherence for all legislation impacting on forest-based industries.

2

Strengthen, not weaken, the competitiveness of the European wood products manufacturing sector including traditional sectors, crafts and SMEs by promoting investment in Europe. To

achieve this outcome it will be necessary to:

- a. maintain a stable macro-economic environment, especially in the related sectors of housing specifically and construction in general
- b. carry out a comprehensive legislative review to harmonise investment, financial and export driven objectives
- c. further the channelling of financing to low-carbon and carbon-storing buildings as a necessary means of building the market for such products, especially those made with wood. Such actions should include:
 - i) revising the EU Taxonomy to increase its whole-life carbon (WLC) requirements beyond those mandated in the revised Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD)
 - ii) scaling up green public procurement buildings requirements to smartly leverage public sector money to also contribute to achieving EU and national climate targets
 - iii) under the EU Carbon Removals Certification Framework, developing certification methodologies for wood-based and bio-based construction products that enable sufficient certification of such products while reflecting the need for such additional funding to mainstream the use of wooden construction products.
- d. create Career Pathway Roadmaps for the woodworking manufacturing sector, in collaboration with the social partners and companies, in order to guide students into working in the wood products value chain by directing them to accessible and appropriate certificated and vocational school programs, which may need to be created where they do not exist. One option for achieving this would be via the New European Bauhaus Academy.



3

Promote a high ambition for European open strategic autonomy for renewable raw materials and their processing for strategic applications, hence to complement primary production it is important to boost the availability of secondary materials in Europe:

- a. in order to support a transition to a sustainable and circular bioeconomy, systems to divert wood from waste streams through the improved sorting and collection of urban and reclaimed wood from cities and communities should be implemented
- b. with innovation and collaboration between public and private sector organisations being fostered to enhance material recovery, reuse, avoided waste and achieve greater circularity. Partnerships and cooperation throughout the value chain should be encouraged to improve efficiency and effectiveness in raw material sourcing and recovery
- c. by requiring buildings to be designed for disassembly to facilitate the re-use of wood structural elements and the continued long-term storage of the carbon within them
- d. via mainstreaming the renewability of bio-based materials as a central pillar of circularity, alongside recyclability and reuse in legislation, policy instruments and standardisation
- e. by establishing new standards (and updating existing standards) that are necessary for a more efficient wood processing, use, reuse and recycling and setting up end-of-waste (EoW) criteria for wood streams in order to promote wood circularity, facilitate the development of secondary raw materials markets for recovered wooden construction products and help expand wood availability.



4

Design policies and regulations to ensure that all buildings – irrespective of what they are made from – are responsible for generating as little CO₂ as possible during their construction and life span, and that the storage of carbon in buildings is recognised as a climate benefit. New buildings that would generate high levels of CO₂ emissions during their construction and/or usage should be denied planning permission. Encourage the market adoption of low carbon materials by guiding efforts, in line with a Whole Life Carbon (WLC) approach, to reduce embodied carbon i.e. the combined emissions from manufacturing, transportation, construction and renovation. Supporting actions should include:

- a. normalising the calculation and reporting of WLC by requiring WLC assessments for all new buildings (excluding single build family homes), civil/municipal works and for major renovations, and imposing science-based WLC limit values (reflecting national and building type differences)
- b. ensuring that the necessary and reliable data for WLC assessments (such as Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs)) are readily available and affordable for all the market operators, in particular micro-enterprises and SMEs
- c. developing a standardised framework of dynamic life cycle assessment to account more accurately for carbon removals associated with carbon storage in construction products with the intention of incentivising carbon storage in building construction products and buildings to increase the above-ground carbon pool
- d. integrating this new standard of dynamic life cycle assessment into EU construction sector policies and tools - e.g. EPDs or Level(s) - to inform users of the benefit of stored biogenic carbon and thus help stimulate demand from an environmental perspective
- e. completing the single market by harmonising construction standards as much as possible across the EU. This would open up opportunities for companies providing wood building solutions
- f. increasing EU funding to develop the next-generation of wood products, including engineered timbers made from hardwoods, in addition to today's mainly softwood engineered timbers. Such funding is necessary to support innovation and climate transition actions by the EU wood products sector, especially given climate impacts on the diversity of species in EU forests and subsequently on sawmill feedstocks.



5

Ensure coherence across policy areas covering the environment and climate, energy, construction, waste management, digitalisation as well as education and skills improvement.

6

Recognise that, while pursuing the renovation agenda, there is still a need to support the important role played by the construction sector in dealing with the increasing need for affordable and sustainable newly built assets.

7

Enable the European Bioeconomy to step up its efforts in contributing to achieving a resilient and competitive net-zero European economy including decarbonising the built environment.

8

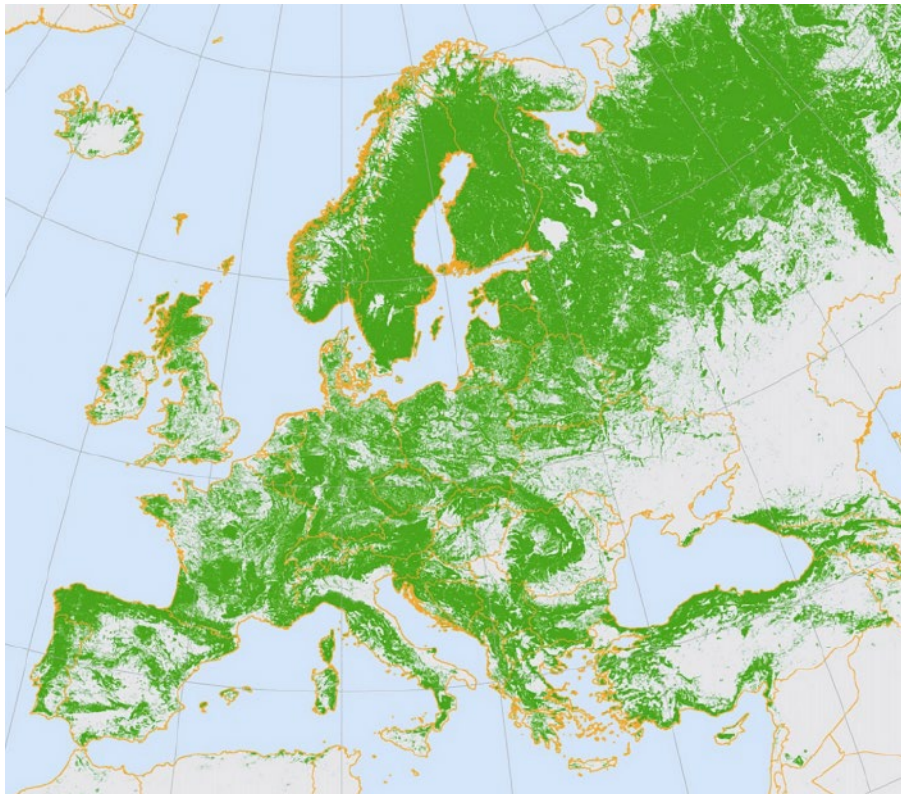
Harmonise building codes - with regards to the use of timber in construction - to make building with wood easier across multiple geographies at both a country and a European level.

Europe has been at the forefront of implementing climate change policies and regulations and working to find ways to reduce the pressure on our planet's environment and finite resources. By choosing wood products we can have a significant and positive impact on climate change now and into the future. Wood, as a key renewable resource, can be used to create reusable and recyclable materials.

Seven facts you need to know about European wood:

01

Renewable Resource: Wood is a renewable resource because tree felling/harvesting in sustainably managed forests – as found throughout Europe – is followed by new planting or natural regeneration, or a combination of both. Moreover, habitats important for biodiversity are preserved, restored or safeguarded in sustainably managed forests. The European woodworking and sawmill industries, represented by CEI-Bois and EOS, advocate for the use of wood that is legally sourced from sustainably managed forests.



Europe's forest cover is extensive covering 47 per cent of the continent. The cover has increased by 5 per cent since 2000 and the amount of wood produced has increased.

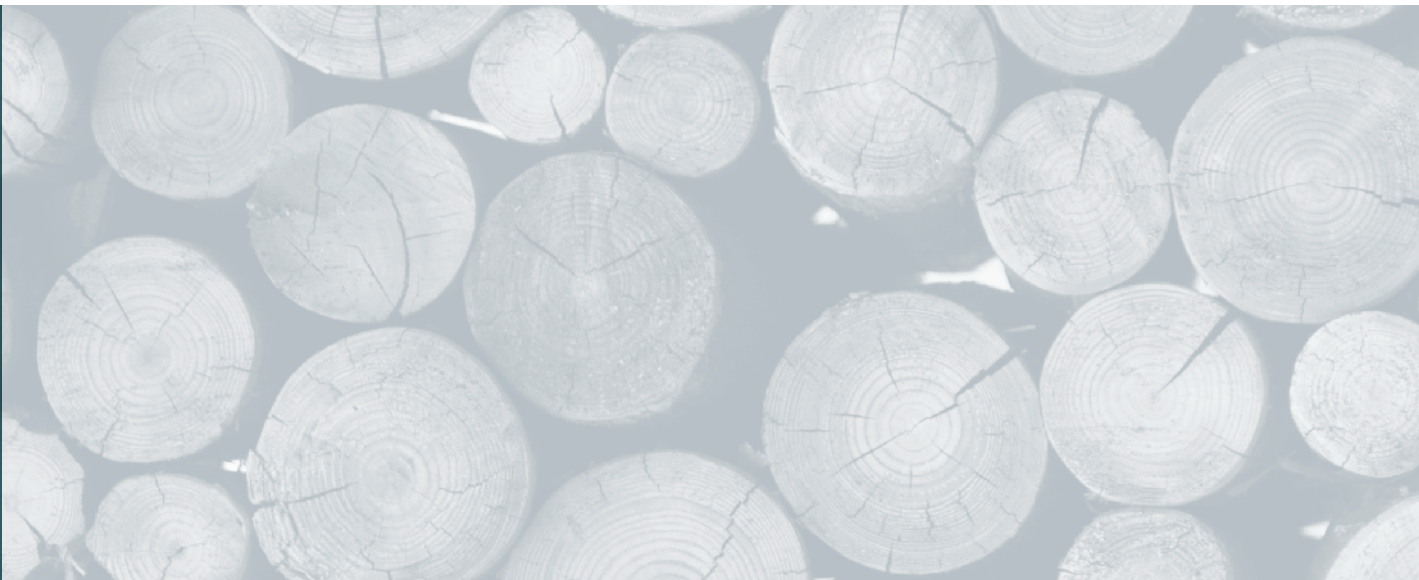
02

Carbon Sequestration and Storage:

Trees absorb carbon dioxide during photosynthesis and store carbon in their biomass. This carbon is then stored in the harvested wood, typically for many decades in the case of wood used for building products. This is an important and ready-to-further-deploy means of mitigating climate change.



*Building and insulating with wood can safely store huge amounts of carbon
– an effective strategy for tackling climate breakdown*



03

Lower energy needs for production:

Life cycle assessments of common alternative construction materials have shown that many other materials require larger energy inputs during manufacture and construction. In contrast the manufacture of wood products typically requires far less energy given that wood is produced through the power of photosynthesis.



Concrete is responsible for eight per cent of global carbon emissions¹

1. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2018/06/making-concrete-change-innovation-low-carbon-cement-and-concrete>



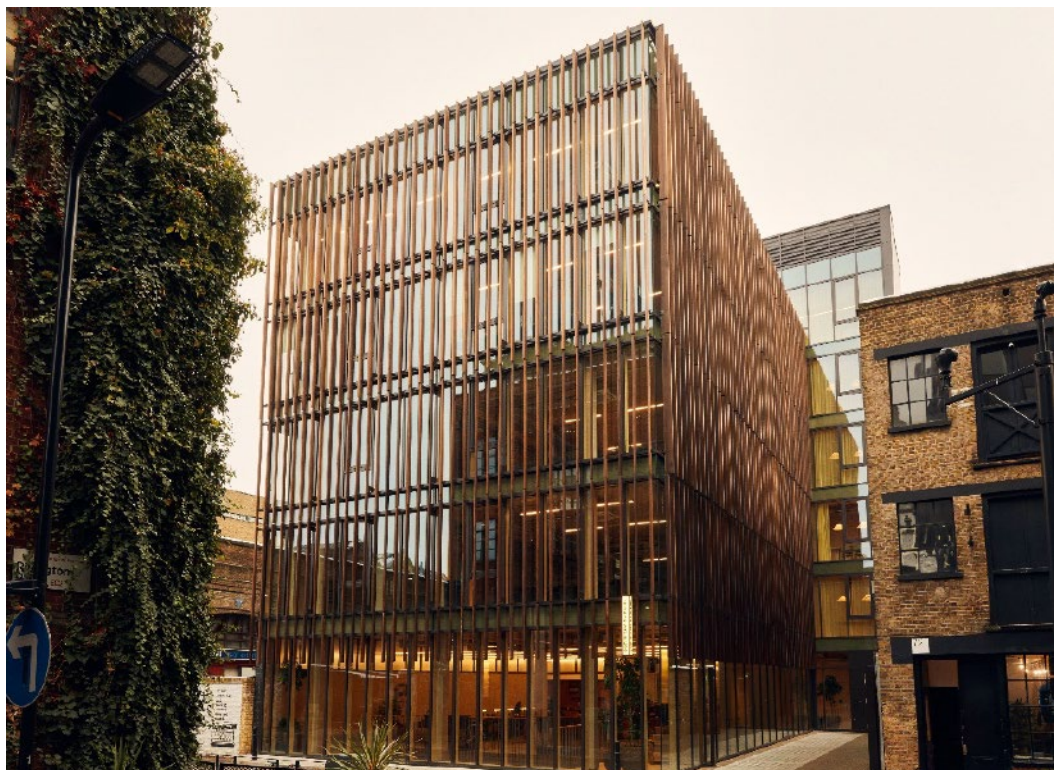
04

Circular wood - recyclability and reuse:

Wood products are typically designed to maintain their functional performance for as long as possible. The residues generated during their production are also used to make additional products such as wood-based panels. When products are no longer needed they can be reused, for instance a parquet floor can be removed from one building and reused in another. When products reach the end of their life they can be recycled. Recycling involves collecting and processing wood products for use into new products such as wood-based panels. Note, wood can be recycled many times in many different forms. Once the options for reuse and recycling have been exhausted then the wood can be used for bioenergy at the end of its lifecycle as substitute for fossil energy. Additionally timber buildings can be designed in such a way that their component parts may be reused. This is known as 'design for disassembly'. All secondary uses of wood are a powerful means of extending both the available timber supply and the storage of carbon in the wood.

Some of Europe's newest timber buildings are being designed for disassembly and the reuse of their component parts as with the Black and White Building in London²

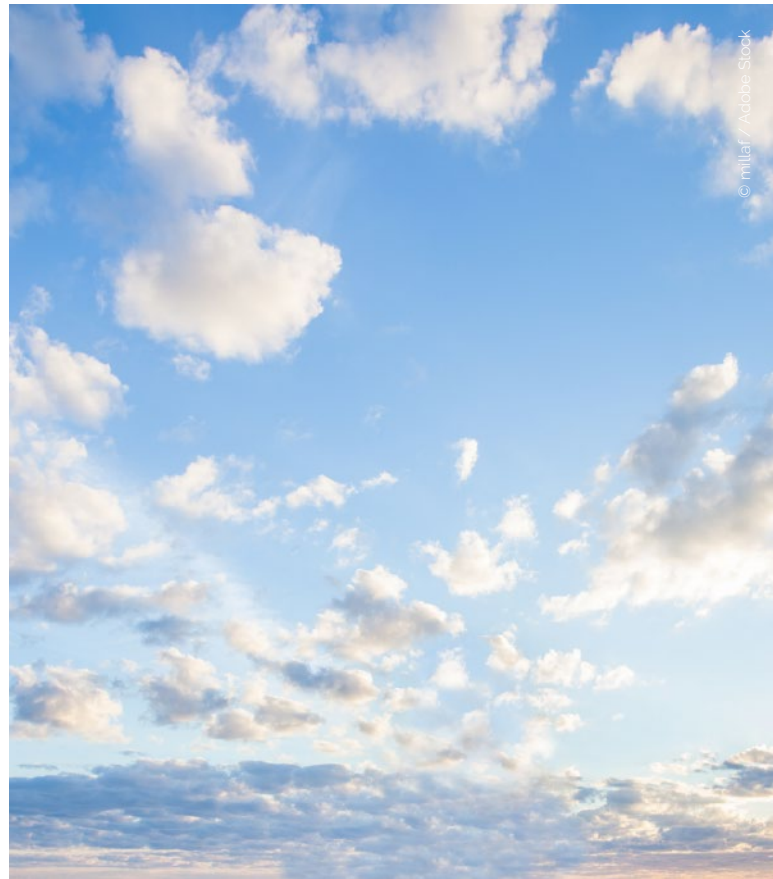
2. <https://waughthistleton.com/black-white-building/>



05

Low Embodied Emissions:

From a climate perspective it is important to document what type of energy was used to extract, process, manufacture and transport a product. The embodied carbon emissions of wood products are usually lower than those of similar products made from fossil fuel-based materials. This is because wood products need less energy to manufacture given that wood is produced via the power of photosynthesis.



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06

Versatility: Wood is a versatile material that can be used in a wide range of applications from construction to furniture to paper production. This versatility allows for a more efficient use of resources. As wood is lighter than other construction materials it is ideal for use in the industrial prefabrication, and fast assembly at building sites, of the growing number of factory-made modular homes that offer good quality homes at a lower cost.



Under construction the new Nokera modular timber framed homes factory in eastern Germany



Wood's lighter weight makes it the ideal material for 'building-on-top' of existing buildings in urban areas allowing cities to grow without building on more countryside



Timber framed modular homes made in factories offer the possibility of lower housing prices combined with a high standard of production



Wood's lighter weight also facilitates an opportunity that exists in every town and city in Europe, that of 'building-on-top' of existing buildings thereby densifying residential and business space without expanding into the surrounding countryside which will require more transport infrastructure. It also enables building on top of civil works such as road and rail tunnels and car parks where traditional building materials are too heavy to enable large structures to be safely built.

07

Aesthetic Appeal: Wood is often chosen for its natural beauty, warmth and aesthetic appeal which provides an added wellbeing value for users. This can lead to longer product lifespans and reduced waste as people are more likely to value and maintain their wooden products.



© Artur Nyk / Adobe Stock



Wooden furniture and floors all store carbon as well as adding beauty and warmth to a home

How wood can decarbonise the built environment

By substituting materials whose manufacture creates CO₂ emissions with nature-based materials such as timber we can significantly reduce carbon emissions. At the same time by using wood-based solutions as construction materials, insulation, flooring, packaging, pallets, fencing, decking, garden sheds, musical instruments, playground toys, furniture etc. we can safely store significant amounts of carbon. This approach is in keeping with the New European Bauhaus initiative and the aim of the European Green Deal which is to make Europe a carbon neutral continent by 2050 and it will be key to reaching the new 2040 emissions target proposed by the European Commission.

At a time when industrial Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) facilities, including BioEnergy with CCS, are still in the early stages of development we already have a tried, tested and proven storage technology in wood's ability to sequester CO₂ while growing in the forest and then safely store the carbon in timber products particularly in our buildings.

If Europe were to become more like Canada and the USA where more than 80 per cent of family homes in the suburbs are built using a timber frame then Europe could store significantly more carbon in its built environment while at the same time substituting out carbon intensive materials.



Wooden pallets last on average ten years facilitating multiple trade deliveries after which they can be recycled into new timber products



Wood is used in a wide range of products

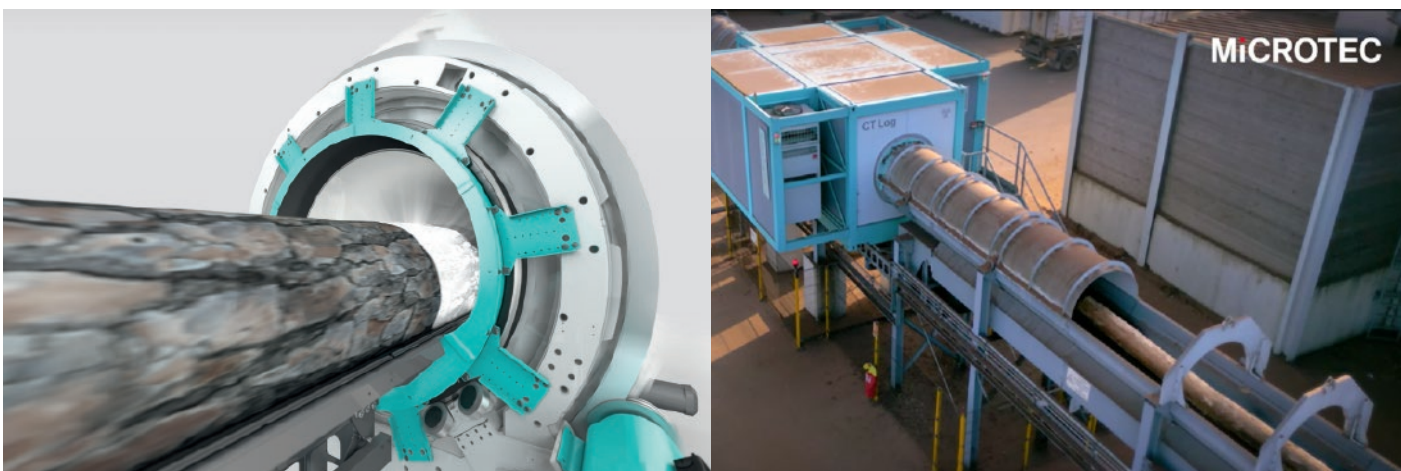
As we use more wood we need to be sure we are using it as efficiently as possible. Material efficiency is an increasingly important consideration within the wood value chain – how can we make more with less? Sawmills are now starting to use X-ray machines or CT-scanning to optimise the cutting of logs to achieve the maximum amount of sawn timber.

Most people spend 85-90 per cent of their time indoors where our wellbeing is impacted by our environment. Healthy homes, schools and work places can help ensure healthy people. There is mounting evidence that timber-based buildings are healthier buildings with numerous benefits including better air quality and users experiencing lower heart rates.³ A switch away from concrete and steel to greener buildings could unleash more benefits for more people in keeping with a more sustainable lifestyle.



In many parts of the Nordics, Scotland, Canada and the USA more than 80 per cent of family homes are timber framed

X-raying logs at a timber mill in France, using equipment made in Italy, enabling material efficiency to be maximised





Europe and North America have a growing number of mid-rise engineered timber buildings as here in Stockholm, Sweden where they are also clad in timber

Summary

The increased use of sustainable wood to manufacture a range of products including construction and renovation materials can substitute for more carbon intensive products and at the same time, in many cases, also has the benefit of storing carbon for several decades in the products. The whole process can deliver key environmental benefits including year on year more and more CO₂ being removed from the atmosphere and safely stored. Across Europe most commercial tree felling is followed either by new planting or natural regeneration. Europe's overall forest cover is expanding - between 1990 and 2015, the area covered by forests and woodlands in Europe increased by 90,000 square kilometres - an area roughly the size of Portugal.

A world first: the new Founder's Building at the University of Washington, USA calculated how much carbon was safely stored in the timber frame, monetised it and then sold it generating income for the university



3. <https://www.structuraltimbermagazine.co.uk/news/can-timber-construction-benefit-health-and-wellbeing/#:~:text=The%20study%20concluded%20that%20along%20with%20benefits%20such,reduce%20stress%20levels%20and%20create%20healthy%20educational%20environments>

4. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/07/forest-europe-environment/>



Recognizing that wood from sustainably managed forests provides climate solutions within the construction sector, we commit to, by 2030, advancing policies and approaches that support low carbon construction and increase the use of wood from sustainably managed forests in the built environment. Such policies and approaches will result in reduced GHG emissions, and an increase in stored carbon.

This announcement was made at a COP 28 Presidency event in 2023 under the auspices of the Forests and Climate Leaders Partnership co-chaired by the United States Special Presidential Climate Envoy, John Kerry and the Minister of Lands and Natural Resources for Ghana, Samuel Jinapor. A coalition of 17 countries endorsed this announcement including Germany, France, Finland, Sweden, UK, USA and Canada.

Two of the world's tallest timber buildings are in Europe: the Sara Cultural Centre in Skellefteå, Sweden (left) and the Mjostarnet Tower in Norway (right) – currently the world's tallest timber building at 18-floors

