

Workshop on the EU 3 Billion Trees Pledge and the Green Denmark Agreement

8 October 2025 – Workshop in Copenhagen

Event Overview

The workshop, co-organised by the European Commission (DG ENV) and Denmark's Agency for Green Transition and Aquatic Environment with support from Milieu Consulting, explored how Denmark's Green Denmark Agreements can contribute to the EU's 3 Billion Trees (3BT) Pledge with the purpose to plant the right tree in the right place for biodiversity and climate change objectives. On top of the already planned afforestation, the Agreements envisage the creation of ~250,000 hectares of new forest by 2045 (approximately 1 billion trees), backed by €2.95 billion allocated by Denmark for afforestation. The workshop brought together EU institutions, national authorities, local governments, nurseries, landowners, forestry students and NGOs to discuss the defining requirements of both initiatives and the necessary conditions for their full deployment, such as land availability, species diversity and selection, nursery capacity, contractor pipelines, reporting and registration in the EU counter, funding and carbon finance and public engagement.

Opening Remarks and Welcoming Words by the Organisers

Marta Ballesteros (Milieu Consulting), Moderator of the event

Marta Ballesteros opened the workshop by welcoming the participants and presenting two closely related initiatives aimed at increasing forest cover in Denmark and across the EU. She highlighted the importance of afforestation initiatives for delivering biodiversity and climate change objectives, which bring benefits beyond forest expansion including forest resilience to pests and fires, groundwater protection and improved soil health. She also mentioned Milieu's role in supporting the Commission with the implementation of the EU pledge through the project aiming to provide better understanding of the challenges and funding opportunities for tree planting by delivering two dedicated published studies and the organisation of thematic webinars and country-specific workshops, such as this one. This workshop is particularly interesting because of Denmark's commitment to plant around one billion trees by 2045. Marta then outlined the two-part agenda dedicated to each of the two initiatives and handed

over to the co-organisers — the Danish Ministry for Green Transition and Aquatic Environment and the European Commission — for the opening remarks.

Katrine Hahn Kristensen (Agency for Green Transition and Aquatic Environment)

Katrine Hahn Kristensen welcomed the participants and emphasised the strong alignment between Denmark's goal of planting approximately one billion trees by 2045 and the EU's 3 Billion Trees Pledge. She emphasised the importance of citizen engagement, using local tree registrations as an example, and presented the workshop as a bridge between national implementation and EU guidance.

Adrian Tišćan (European Commission, DG ENV)

Adrian highlighted the critical importance of the workshop to link national and EU initiatives aimed at the same purpose, which could present through the EU counter the level of commitment in EU Member States with afforestation for biodiversity and climate objectives.

Session One: The 3 Billion Trees Pledge, the registration process and enabling factors.

Adrian Tišćan (European Commission, DG ENV) — The EU Pledge for 3 billion additional trees

Adrian Tišćan reviewed the core principles of the pledge aiming to plant the right tree in the right place for the right purpose. He highlighted that additionality not only means planting new forests but also planting more diverse, resilient and multifunctional forests to restore forest where timber production was the main purpose. The priority for native species under the EU 3 Billion Trees Pledge also needs to be understood within the context of future climate projections – in some cases it might be that suitable non-native species are necessary. He highlighted the importance of long-term care and the links with the Nature Restoration Regulation which requires Member States to contribute to the 3 Billion Trees Pledge and asks them to indicate in their national restoration plans which restoration actions contribute with additional trees. He urged Danish authorities and stakeholders to register their past and future planting activities, as the EU counter currently reflects only a small proportion of the actual tree planting activity. He also referred to the work of the Commission and Milieu Consulting on understanding and considering solutions for existing [challenges, compiled in a Report](#), such as land reclassification, land prices and knowledge gaps for agroforestry, as well as financing. This includes the [EU Funding Guide](#) that the Commission has published to promote knowledge of existing financial opportunities at local, national and EU level to support tree planting initiatives and the new EU carbon removal/carbon farming framework, which is intended to help channel private finance to verified sequestration from tree planting.

Nicolas Robert (European Environment Agency) – The EU platform and counter for registering planted trees

Nicolas Robert introduced the EU's official system for recording trees planted under the 3 Billion Trees pledge. He explained that plantings with biodiversity and climate change objectives and respecting the principles mentioned previously carried out since 2020 can and should be registered. Individuals and community groups can use the [MapMyTree website](#) or mobile app to log their plantings and suggest sites. The platform provides simple fields for entering location, numbers and broad species groups, as well as interactive maps, country statistics and open datasets. Larger organisations such as cities should report in bulk via [ReportNet](#), which allows the easy upload of multiple operations. The process

for registration is supported by videos, step-by-step PDFs and direct assistance. Reporting is commitment-based — users pledge to plant and maintain trees rather than undergo checks — and all contributions feed into the public counter and the Forest Information System for Europe, where organisations are credited. He encouraged municipalities and other large-scale operators to start reporting (or backfill) so that the EU counter reflects real activity.

Sara Godthaab Dilling and Sabine Emilie Fennefoss Bye (Danish Presidency of the EU Council) – Negotiations on EU Regulation on Forest Reproductive Material

Sara Godthaab Dilling and Sabine Emilie Fennefoss Bye outlined the critical importance of the proposal for EU Regulation on Forest Reproductive Material (FRM) and the current status of the negotiations between Council, European Parliament and Commission. Parliament's position is close to that of the Commission, and trilogues are underway with the Danish Presidency hopeful of concluding them in November, subject to negotiations. Once adopted, the Regulation will replace the 1999 Directive, harmonising marketing rules to ensure the supply of high-quality, traceable material from approved sources through certification. They summarised the aims of the proposal to modernise the framework, support resilient forests that can withstand the effects of climate change, and align with wider EU policies, including the 3 Billion Trees pledge. Key novelties include incorporating elements of the Official Controls system into the FRM, providing information to users on ecological suitability, allowing approval for conservation purposes and introducing contingency planning. However, the Council's June mandate only seeks partial application of the Official Controls system, favouring approval of basic reproductive material by competent authorities instead of self-approval by operators and makes contingency plans voluntary. It also expands the species list to include artificial hybrids.

Barry Delany (Director, Irish Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Ministry) – The Irish afforestation plan and experience

Barry Delany traced Ireland's journey from 1% forest cover in the early 1900s to around 12% today. He set out a plan to increase this figure to 18%, based on the principle of planting the right trees in the right place for the right reasons and managing them effectively. He emphasised the positive impact of available incentives including substantial grants and tax-free annual premiums of approximately €800–€1,200 per hectare for a period of 20 years, alongside the option of tax-free timber income. He also highlighted a shift towards planting more than 50% broadleaves, the potential of agroforestry and the provision of support through advisory services, knowledge-transfer groups, seed orchards and a strengthened nursery pipeline. Key challenges include land availability, competing land uses and permitting procedures as well as environmental constraints including climate risks, notably wind. Other challenges include legacy plantings on peat, workforce capacity, and securing seed and planting stock. However, the state forestry company is re-engaging, and restoration offers opportunities. He urged recognition of non-native species in EU countries with no native-species and careful species selection. Ireland has pledged 5.3 million broadleaved trees to the EU 3 billion target (2020-2024) and will pledge additional 2.5 million trees in 2025. He also underlined the similarities with Denmark's approach.

Bent Leonhard (Technical Secretary, European Forest Nursery Association) – The perspective of European nurseries

Bent Leonhard (EFNA) outlined the capacity and constraints of European nurseries. They could supply the additional trees required for the 3 Billion Trees pledge if the conditions were right, particularly if there was predictable, multi-year demand, orders were placed in a timely manner with clear planting specifications and sufficient funding support were provided. He emphasised the significant regional

disparities — Nordic countries produce substantial volumes of container stock, whereas much of Central Europe relies on smaller bareroot output — and observed that approximately 80% of nurseries have the capacity to increase production. However, key bottlenecks include limited access to seed stands, climate-related seed failures and earlier ripening, production losses and discards of roughly a fifth to a quarter due to drought, flooding, pests and fewer plant-protection options, as well as shortages of skilled staff. Fluctuations in policy (e.g. subsidy design, plants-per-hectare rules and emphasis on natural regeneration) create unstable markets. Better long-term planning and coordination across the value chain would reduce waste and increase capacity.

Q&A and discussion based on the presentations in session one

The discussion focused on how to increase both the number of trees planted and the number of registrations on the EU register. The Commission emphasised that the pledge is voluntary and its credibility relies in the stakeholders compliance commitment through the signed MoU. The success is based on collaboration with Member States, cities, and major planters and, while reporting is not complex, the Commission is seeking to streamline bulk reporting and consider linking compliant national registries. Remote sensing can also be considered as one of the possibilities for the future. Funding was a recurring theme, with funding streams available but not always clearly earmarked. While CAP flexibility helps, national budgets often prove decisive. Barry Delany described Ireland's generous long-term premiums and plans for ecosystem service payments after 2020. Bent Leonhard emphasised the need for predictable, multi-year schemes and early orders, noting a growing customer base of municipalities and companies. In addition, participants emphasised the importance of biodiversity on former agricultural land, advocating for tree planting to ensure connectivity to existing forests and potential soil or mycorrhiza interventions. They also requested that public access and well-being be incorporated into new forests wherever possible. Overall, speakers called for better advice for landowners, easier access to earmarked funding for tree planting/afforestation, the selection of species based on scientific evidence, and coordinated outreach so that more real-world plantings are reported to the EU platform.

Session two: Increasing the forest cover in Denmark

Katrine Hahn Kristensen (Agency for Green Transition and Aquatic Environment) – The Agreements on a Green Denmark and the Danish plans for afforestation towards 2045

Katrine Hahn Kristensen outlined Denmark's plan to accelerate afforestation, increasing forest cover from around 15% today to approximately 21% by 2045. The Green Denmark Agreements sets out five purposes for the creation of new forests: cleaner groundwater and aquatic environments; increased biodiversity; higher CO₂ uptake; improved recreational opportunities, particularly near towns; and the production of biomass and timber for the green transition. She also described how these objectives would be delivered via a Green Land Fund of approximately DKK 43 billion (around €5.8 billion), an afforestation budget of around €2.95 billion, with grants of around €10,000 per hectare plus around €2,000 per hectare for set-aside, and 23 local partnerships preparing transformation plans. On top of already planned afforestation, the targets amount to around 250,000 hectares of new forest by 2045 (150,000 hectares of private land, 80,000 hectares of privately owned land set aside, and 20,000 hectares of state-owned land set aside), which is estimated to have a climate effect of around 1.7 million tonnes of CO₂ per year by 2045.

Søren K. Laursen, Special Advisor, Urban Development and Green Transition – Views from Roskilde Municipality on local engagement and implementation of the Green Denmark Agreement Locally

Søren K. Laursen described how Roskilde translates national goals into local action. This is achieved through existing plans, such as the climate plan, the municipal vision and the long-standing green–blue strategy, as well as a governance set-up in which the municipality takes the lead with the support of a Local Agreement Council and a new Coastal Council. Roskilde uses nitrogen-retention mapping and field-level modelling to identify the most effective locations for afforestation or nature restoration, with approximately one-third of local farmland earmarked for change. He presented a groundwater protection forest developed with the Danish Nature Agency and HOFOR, where land is acquired over time for planting trees in areas of sufficient size and forests are designed to promote biodiversity and public access, incorporating mixed species, no rows and co-planned paths, through a local forest council comprising agencies, NGOs and residents. The municipality is also planning to afforest and create another large forest while rewetting drained areas and reopening watercourses. Key constraints include soaring land prices, competition with productive agriculture, protections on existing semi-natural land and the long timelines needed to assemble sites. Consequently, Roskilde emphasises patient, multifunctional, nature-based solutions.

Q&A and discussion based on the presentations in session two

The discussion explored how Denmark will achieve such ambitious local afforestation. Regarding planting material, speakers said that supply must be planned with nurseries and seed providers. Some areas will rely on natural regeneration near seed sources. A national plan will establish target areas and hectares and timelines, rather than counting species individually. Regarding wetlands and rewetting, farmers are becoming more open to the idea where profits are low, and regulations are being introduced. Current schemes are voluntary, but they will be tightened up, and compensation and local partnerships will help to increase uptake. Søren K. Laursen explained its land strategy of buying whole farms and later reselling the buildings. They also noted rising prices and competition with productive farmland and said that projects are planned over decades. When asked about competing forest types, they emphasised the importance of multifunctional design within the Danish Forest Act, stating that a bonus would only be given for set-aside forests. Management will largely rest with landowners, though municipalities will often contract local farmers for grazing and upkeep. Regarding tracking, Denmark can use existing registries (e.g. the Climate Forest Fund) and minimum-trees-per-hectare rules, as well as linking data to the EU counter. Project selection is prioritised using a scoring system that first considers nitrogen hotspots, proximity to forests, nature value, and drinking-water protection.

Session three: Stakeholder views on the Green Denmark Agreements and involved in tree planting

Kim Nielsen (Growing Trees Network)

Kim Nielsen described a private sector, citizen-driven afforestation model focused on groundwater protection and community ownership. Since 2013, the private company & foundation has planted approximately 3.9 million trees in 165 forests in Denmark. They have worked with 35 municipalities, the Danish Nature Agency and private landowners, including farmers, churches, water utilities and schools. The foundation is known for its large public planting days and compelling narratives, which are amplified through media partnerships such as the 2019 TV2 fundraiser in Denmark that financed 48 forests (~1.1

million trees). Nielsen outlined a transparent funding model in which sponsors' contributions allocate roughly 80% to landowners' establishment costs and 20% to operations. However, Nielsen flagged a scaling constraint: new state grants now outbid NGO offers, limiting access to private sites, which many sponsors prefer. He proposed that landowners involved in their scheme should be allowed to combine the state income-compensation component with their company grants so that public funds and private donations complement each other rather than competing.

Christian Bogh (Deputy Director on Communication at DALGAS)

Christian Bogh (DALGAS), representing Denmark's largest afforestation company, presented the view that progress is real, but "we're not there yet". DALGAS has planted millions of trees — he said around 4 million last year alone — and was unaware that these could be added to the EU 3 Billion Trees Pledge counter, which could potentially be 15–20 million trees over the past five years. Currently, one of the strongest drivers is groundwater protection, with water utilities willing to fund large projects. However, land assembly is slow (e.g. acquiring ~500 hectares can take 2–3 years of negotiations). Rising land prices and competing uses (e.g. solar and wind farms, and corporate buyers) mean that the current grant levels are unattractive, especially as policy attention has shifted from climate to nitrogen and aquatic impacts. Municipal plans often prioritise other measures over forests and many scheme details remain uncertain. He therefore argued for a clear national forest plan to inform species and site choices, ensuring that investments made now will be appropriate for decades to come.

Q&A and discussion based on the presentations in session three

The discussion centred on realising public–private collaboration: speakers agreed that it is possible — and essential — but only if stakeholders sit down together and understand how new schemes affect those already involved in planting. Several interventions highlighted that shifting and delayed EU and national rules (e.g. taxonomy, CSRD/ESG and 'omnibus' pauses) create uncertainty among landowners and sponsors, who may prefer to 'wait and see'; clearer, faster and more stable frameworks are needed to incentivise action. Sponsors want to be confident that they can communicate their contributions without committing greenwashing. The Commission noted its ongoing work to simplify the taxonomy while maintaining high ambitions. Regarding finance, participants recognised the potential of carbon and biodiversity credits but deemed the current voluntary carbon markets in Denmark to be immature. The flexibility regarding additionality in the 3 Billion Trees is welcomed where large public afforestation budgets targeted to specific land exist. Credible methodologies and a functioning market are prerequisites. Municipal success stories were encouraged to build momentum.

Concluding remarks

To conclude, the organisers emphasised that many planting initiatives across the EU are not yet reflected in the 3 Billion Trees counter. They suggested that integrating national registries, such as Denmark's, could increase the numbers and raise public awareness. Clarifications were provided on the concept of additionality, including the eligibility of diversifying existing forests. The ways in which public schemes can complement private and NGO initiatives was also discussed. Although funding remains a constraint, practical models and success stories (e.g. Ireland and DALGAS) demonstrate what can be achieved. The Commission thanked the participants, recognised both opportunities and barriers, and committed to taking the workshop's messages forward, while stressing that there is no quick fix.