



Transilvania
University
of Brasov

RECTOR OFFICE

29 Eroilor Blvd.
500036 – Braşov, Romania
Tel.: (+40) 268.413.000 | Fax: (+40) 268.410.525
rector@unitbv.ro | www.unitbv.ro

09.06.2020

Attn: European Wilderness Society
Mr. Max Rossberg
Email: max.rossberg@wilderness-society.org

Dear Mr. Rossberg,

We have read the article "*Science in the crossfire of Romanian logging conflict*" posted few days ago on the European Wilderness Society website (<https://wilderness-society.org/science-in-the-crossfire-of-romanian-logging-conflict/>), and authored by Jonas Sommer. As we believe many aspects related to our institution are presented in a one sided manner and do not represent the truth, we bring to your attention the following:

1. First of all our analysis was strictly related to the content of the PRIMOFARO report (as it was released to the public by EURONATUR), and not to the "*logging conflict*" as mentioned on your website or any other related political and/or economic issues in Romania. Our analysis is an "*objective scientific criticism that would be beneficial and necessary for every study*" (as mentioned on your website). We consider that the article's claim according to which science should "***never become the pawn of political and economic powerbrokers***" is contradictory as PRIMOFARO itself (despite its limitations, acknowledged by the authors themselves and reviewers also) was, and still is, promoted aggressively to political decision makers (the article mentions that "*EuroNatur, its Romanian NGO partner Agent Green and the authors of the report call on both the EU Commission and the Romanian government to take urgent action to improve protection of this unique European natural heritage*"). However, as science aims at improving our knowledge, it is, and always was, used for decision making (one example is even the new EU Biodiversity Strategy) and therefore the article's claim contradicts the common sense and the reality. Moreover, the way our analysis and any other science is interpreted and used





(especially misused and abused), is the full responsibility of those who do this and not of those who carried the research. Any misinterpretation or misuse of scientific results should be blamed on those responsible for such actions but should not stop science and scientific debates.

2. Among allegations, the article forgot to mention that our analysis' main conclusion (that due to the shortcomings and deficiencies, including the ones presented in the text of the report, "*the PRIMOFARO report **cannot be used in decision making***") was the same as the main one of the reviewers of PRIMOFARO (underlined in their letter – "*polygons should be considered as perimeters with a **high potential of containing such forests**, and calls for **further validation and verification** of these polygons ... these forests, **if scientifically verified**, deserve protection under current Romanian and EU legislation" and also mentioned in the article on your website ("*PRIMOFARO itself lists **several limitations** as it is a analysis **solely based on remote sensing**. Hence, the authors have concluded that an **additional on-site evaluation is necessary**"). Indeed, the same conclusion ("*To **clarify the real conditions** on the ground, **field checks** and consultation of management plans should be considered as next steps. It is **suggested** that **PRIMOFARO digital maps are evaluated** by overlays with forest management plan data, data from National Forest Inventory and **by field checks** ...") was inserted in the PRIMOFARO report as well, in the chapter delineating the limitations of the study, however not linked and even in contradiction to many other conclusions and recommendations.***

Therefore, it is clear that all parties actually agree that at this stage, before such thorough analysis in the field, PRIMOFARO cannot be used for any decision making on forest conservation in Romania.

3. For a correct and fair information of your public, it should be clarified that the *offer* (mentioned in the European Wilderness Society website article) from the authors of PRIMOFARO was not related to any additional *on-site evaluation* of their results but only to offer information on the released report. Before starting the analysis, we requested the GIS data from but such data was never received.

4. Another aspect forgotten by the article author was to mention that we have provided detailed answers to the letter with concerns of the reviewers (mentioning also the fact that we have requested the GIS data about the study at the time of the analysis). This document is also publicly available at <http://gef.unitbv.ro/index.php/en/public-release>.



5. Last but not least, to avoid confusions on our analysis, we strongly recommend using the available translated documents provided on our webpage (at the same address mentioned above) by our institution and not using **Google translate** (as mentioned in the article from your website).

Taking into account all those stated above, for the sake of offering factual, comprehensive and unbiased information to your readers, pursuant to our right of reply and correction¹, we consider you should update your article with this information and provide your readers with a link to our documents as well (as you provided to other sources of information).

Sincerely yours,



Prof. Dr. Ioan Vasile Abrudan
Rector
Transilvania University of Braşov



Prof. Dr. Alexandru Lucian Curtu
Dean
Faculty of Silviculture and Forest
Engineering

¹ as provided under the UN Convention on the International Right of Correction, the EU Resolution of the Committee of Ministers on the Right of Reply and Art. 9 of the Austrian National Media Law.