



FOREST EUROPE Work Programme: Pan-European Follow-Up of the Madrid Ministerial Conferences

Since 1st January, 2016, Slovakia holds the presidency in the FOREST EUROPE process (formerly known as Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe), therefore, Slovakia also hosts the secretariat of the process – the Liaison Unit Bratislava (LUB) which was established within organisational structure of the National Forest Centre in Zvolen. FOREST EUROPE is a unique forest policy process addressing and developing common decisions on issues of the highest political relevance. Having recently celebrated its 25th anniversary, the process has 47 signatories (46 European countries and the European Union), and a number of other observer countries and organizations also participate. Key outputs include Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management, Pan European Approach to National Forest Programs and comprehensive report State of Europe's Forests, among the others.

FOREST EUROPE Work Programme

The new FOREST EUROPE Work Programme for the period 2016–2020 was prepared by the Liaison Unit Bratislava in cooperation with the former Liaison United Madrid and under the oversight of the General Coordinating Committee. The Work Programme reflects commitments made at the 7th Ministerial Conference and the Extraordinary Ministerial Conference, held on 20–21 October 2016, in Madrid, Spain. In addition, some of the planned actions (broader thematic areas) and activities (such as expert groups, analyses and workshops) also refer to the commitments adopted at previous FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conferences. The policy goals for European Forests and the European 2020 Targets for Forests adopted at the 6th Ministerial Conference in Oslo (2011) need to be addressed through this Work Programme as well.

The main objective of the Work Programme is to continue to promote sustainable forest management (SFM) in signatory countries, reflecting latest developments, knowledge, and innovations on emerging issues, and to develop common strategies to this end.

The activities of the Work Programme will be carried out in cooperation with FOREST EUROPE signatories and observers, the Liaison Unit, and other relevant regional actors. Cooperation with regional bodies and processes within Europe and, where relevant, in a broader geographical context (e.g. United Nations Economic Commission for Europe - UNECE, Food and Agricultural Organisation - FAO, United Nations Environmental Programme - UNEP, European Forest Institute - EFI, United Nations Forum on Forests - UNFF, Convention on Biological Diversity - CBD, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change - UNFCCC, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification - UNCCD, and International Union of Forest Research Organizations - IUFRO) will be strengthened, and synergies in the implementation of the relevant Work Programmes will be sought, following dialogue with the entities listed, specifically with the UNECE/FAO Integrated

Programme of Work. Further efforts to reach out to other sectors will also be made.

The Work Programme is fully aligned with the latest relevant global initiatives, such as the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the UNFF11 Resolution, and the Paris Agreement, and, where relevant, will seek to contribute to their implementation.

The FOREST EUROPE Work Programme for the period 2016–2020 comprises following actions and activities:

- **Further development and updating of policies and tools for sustainable forest management.** This overarching action will contribute to better coordination of policy tools on forests and forest management at global, regional, sub regional and national levels, e.g. the 2030 Agenda including its SDGs, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, Global objectives on Forests, regional C&I process and their subsets for the assessment of SFM, and Global Forest Resource Assessments (FRAs), and to communication between them and other sectors. The Expert Group will consider implementation of the updated set of SFM indicators, inter alia, monitor and analyse how C&I are developed and how they could be implemented. Apart from that, possible uses of the pan-European C&I subsets and reporting on national and pan-European achievements on Goals and 2020 Targets for European Forests. The output of the analysis should include detailed explanation and clarification of the particular subsets, inter alia, for assessing and communicating the achievements of SFM and addressing other policy areas.
- **Forest monitoring and reporting.** Monitoring and reporting on forests and SFM, including the preparation and production of the State of Europe's Forests Report (SoEF), belong to regular FOREST EUROPE activities. Collaborative data collection for the next edition of SoEF 2020 should be done in close cooperation with FAO Global Forest Resources Assessments and Joint UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section. Within this action, also the pilot studies on new indicators will be carried out, in terms of data availability, reliability and feasibility for three newly defined indicators (2.5 Forest land degradation, 4.7 Forest fragmentation, 4.10 Common forest bird species). Pan-European forest monitoring and reporting should also facilitate the evaluation of achievements on Goals and 2020 Targets for European Forests.
- **Enhancing the role of sustainable forest management in a green economy.** FOREST EUROPE with the assistance of Expert Group and in collaboration with partners (signatory countries and relevant international institutions) will identify and specify new skills required for forest workers, forest managers and forest owners in the context of green economy as well as other requirements for green jobs in the forest sector. Subsequently, achievements of the Expert Group will be discussed at

a workshop. Outcomes of the workshop including recommendations and best practice examples will lead to preparation of guidelines on the promotion of green jobs in the forest sector. Another workshop will be organized to promote long term competitiveness of the whole forest sector and its related value chain, highlighting the role of wood and other forest products and goods from sustainable sources, including innovative materials contributing to transition to a green economy.

- ***Incorporating the value of forest ecosystem services in a green economy.*** FOREST EUROPE Expert Group will carry out an analysis of different approaches, methodologies and best practice examples on valuation of and payments for forest ecosystem services (FES) particularly in the signatory countries. Subsequently, recommendations for policy makers with the aim to facilitate implementation of valuation of and payments for FES will be developed. Outcomes of the analysis will serve as a base for establishment of a web-based portal in order to promote exchange of information and experience on valuation of FES and PES schemes existing in the pan-European region.
- ***Protection of forests in a changing environment, including their adaptation to climate change.*** Within this action, an Expert Group will conduct a questionnaire survey to explore the current state of implementation of adaptation measures to climate change at national levels. Based on the survey, a publication “Integration of adaptation measures into SFM in Europe” will be worked out, comprising knowledge base and work done in the region, identifying the best practices and possible recommendations for the integration of adaptation measures into SFM in the region. Two workshops shall be organized within this action to share expertise, experience and prepare recommendation for policy makers on protection of forests in changing environments combating desertification, land degradation and drought, highlighting the role of forestry and agroforestry to this end.
- ***Enhancing the social dimension of sustainable forest management*** in the context of the benefits of forests to human health and well-being. A group of experts will review international data on social aspects of SFM with special attention to impacts and benefits of forest environment and forest products on human health and well-being. A workshop will be convened to share knowledge, experience and best practice examples relating to impact of forests on human health (mental and physical), well-being and personal development. Outcomes of the review together with recommendations from the workshop will result in publication focused on promotion of entrepreneurship related to forests and businesses based on processing of non-wood products (ecotourism, sport, outdoor learning and therapy programmes). Apart from that, awareness raising and promotion of the topic within and outside forest sector (health sector, tourism, sport, education, etc.) will be crucial for successful implementation of the action.

- ***Review of the FOREST EUROPE process.*** The objective of this activity will be to further develop the FOREST EUROPE process with a view to adapting it to current and future challenges, and to enhance its contribution to the promotion of SFM in Europe. The subject of the Review will be the FOREST EUROPE process, its structure, procedures and work modalities, in order to make it more effective and inclusive.
- ***Discussion on the follow-up to the Madrid Extraordinary Ministerial Conference.*** Building upon the efforts made in previous years, FOREST EUROPE will explore possible ways to find common ground for a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe.
- ***Communication and outreach.*** The communication activities should further enhance the positive perception of forest and the forest sector’s multiple contributions to global and societal needs, as well as the achievements of its overall objectives. Some new communication activities such as “Whiteboard” short animation about FOREST EUROPE, Interactive “story maps” with successfully implemented FOREST EUROPE commitments will be launched. A new FOREST EUROPE webpage will have new, modern and all-devices responsive design, easy orientation or event management system. Moreover, the process will be promoted at the core events (i.e. International Day of Forests, European Forest Week, Sessions of FAO Committee on Forestry - COFO, Sessions of the UNECE Committee on Forests and Forest Industry - COFFI, UNFF meetings etc.).

First FOREST EUROPE meetings organized during the Slovak chairmanship

FOREST EUROPE Expert Level Meeting

On 11–12 May 2016, Bratislava hosted the first Expert Level Meeting (ELM) since the Slovak Republic took over the chairmanship of the FOREST EUROPE process. Nearly 70 delegates representing 29 signatory countries, the European Union and 14 observer organisations attended the meeting. ELM represents the decision-making body of the FOREST EUROPE process in the period between Ministerial Conferences. The recent ELM was prepared by the new Liaison Unit Bratislava under the oversight of the General Coordinating Committee, which currently consists of the Slovak Republic, Spain, Germany, Turkey and Sweden. Ms. Gabriela Matečná, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic, opened the meeting and expressed in her introductory speech the importance of the task and the responsibility that Slovakia bears for the FOREST EUROPE process. A key objective of the meeting was the discussion and adoption of the new FOREST EUROPE Work Programme and its pan-European actions and activities in follow up to the Madrid Ministerial Conferences. Besides the Work Programme, the ELM also discussed next steps in the Review of the FOREST EUROPE process.



Fig. 1. Expert Level Meeting was opened by Ms. Gabriela Matečná, the minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic.



Fig. 2. Delegates of 29 signatory countries and 14 observer organisation discussed at ELM the new FOREST EUROPE Work Programme for the up-coming period 2016–2020.

First meeting of the Working Group on the Future Direction of FOREST EUROPE

At the Madrid Ministerial Conference held in October 2015, the FOREST EUROPE signatories and observers had decided on a review of the process, especially its structures, procedures and work modalities with a view to adapting to current and future challenges. The review was launched by adopting the Terms of Reference with Roadmap, and by appointing two co-chair countries, France and Ukraine, to lead the Working Group on the Future Direction of FOREST EUROPE at the Expert Level Meeting in May 2016.

The first meeting of the Working Group took place on 12–13 October 2016, in Bratislava. Participants from 21 signatory countries and the European Union as well as 7 international observer organizations attended the event, which indicates a keen interest in the momentum generated by the review. The format of the meeting was a discussion forum to

enable brainstorming about issues that require attention and will need to be addressed. There was an ample discussion on the multiple factors that influence efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and inclusiveness of the process. Outcomes of the discussion provide a key input to the comprehensive, web-based questionnaire survey of opinions of all signatories and observers to be conducted in the beginning of 2017.



Fig. 3. Mr. Peter Kicko, Director General of the Forestry and Wood Processing Section of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development officially opened the first meeting of the Working Group on the Future Direction of FOREST EUROPE.



Fig. 4. Meeting of the Working Group was led by two co-chairs Ms. Claire Morlot (France) and Ms. Liubov Poliakov (Ukraine) with technical and administrative support by the Liaison Unit Bratislava.

According to the roadmap discussed at the meeting, the second meeting of the Working Group to evaluate survey results and produce a draft report will take place by June 2017. The final report with recommendations will then be presented to the Expert Level Meeting in autumn 2017.

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