

## **EU Forestry Policy and Research**

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### **Introduction and Rationale**

Forest and timber management, respectively forests, are not part of the EU Treaties, which is also the reason why there can be no legal basis providing for the imperative co-ordination of forest-relevant activities and measures on EU level. Forestry and forest policy are thus subject to the principle of subsidiarity.

Nevertheless forests have become an interesting issue for more and more fields of policy regulated on EU level. Forest-relevant topics have therefore to an always higher degree also been treated within the framework of other policies and many of them have also been regulated there; the bodies responsible for forestry in Member States have rarely any influence on the regulation and decision-making processes at EU-level. The principle of subsidiarity has thus increasingly become an empty word. The accession of Sweden, Finland and Austria, countries rich in forests with a powerful timber industry, in 1995, has added a new dimension to this issue. Not least for this reason a common EU Forestry Strategy was negotiated and finally adopted, under the Austrian presidency, in the Council in 1998, in order to counter the trend of treating forest-relevant topics in an uncoordinated way.

Now that five years have passed the situation has doubtlessly improved slightly in some fields thanks to the EU Forestry Strategy, but, taking everything into account, it is still unsatisfying. Especially for issues like climate, soil and water protection, which will soon be treated intensively on EU level, even a further aggravation of the situation must realistically be expected. Moreover, forest and timber management will gain significance due to the accession of 10 more countries. The EU's forest area will grow by 25%, the number of forest owners will rise from 12 million to 15 million, and the degree of self-sufficiency of the EU with respect to wood and wood products will reach approx. 95%. As far as owner categories are concerned, there will be a shift towards public forests at least in the starting phase.

For these reasons many Member States hold the opinion that the situation of forest and timber management will be further aggravated by the continued application of the principle of subsidiarity. There is broad agreement that efforts must be taken to avoid that the economic capacity of forestry is impaired due to diverging political approaches and competencies within the EU, and that we should aim at integrating activities relating to the forestry sector within the Commission in order to strengthen the position of forestry vis-à-vis competing policies on EU level. However, we must proceed on the assumption that the establishment of a market organisation for timber is definitively excluded in this context.

### **Conclusion of Rationale**

The forestry sector needs to be visualised on European level. Currently the forestry sector is not fully recognised as an economic sector that requires holistic policy formulation to develop its full potential.

The responsibilities within the European Commission are fragmented and the policy formulation is single-issue driven.

Sustainability of the forestry sector and its economic viability is increasing at risk through antagonistic policies.

Austria therefore suggests considering the following priorities for an active and efficient role of forestry at the appropriate levels:

- Integration of the European Commission's activities concerning the forestry sector
- Concentration of the responsibilities relating to forestry on EU level
- Strengthening the position and the capacity of forestry in the Community
- Ensuring appropriate conditions for persons working in forestry in rural areas
- Sustainable management of forests as a natural resource
- Safeguarding the multifunctional effects of forests

Austria therefore took the initiative to bring forestry into the EU convention. We came very far with this activity, but finally, at the very last meter, failed to be successful due to the opposition of Germany, to some extent of Sweden and the EU Commission.

Since the Commission has to present a report on the review of the EU Forestry Strategy in October, there was an intensive debate during the last SFC. Content of this debate was a possible alternative to the Austrian proposal. There was no clear conclusion or proposal, but all delegates agreed, that further steps have to be made to improve the situation. The next months therefore will be very important for the future of the forests and forestry within the EU.

### **Forestry within the EU Research Policy**

European Research, and more recently the creation of a "**European Research Area**", has been high on the policy agenda of the EU. Conducting European research policies and implementing European research programmes is not only a legal and political obligation resulting from the Amsterdam Treaty, but it is also essential for the support of other policies.

### **Research actions under the EU Framework Programmes**

#### **The 5th Framework Programme for Research (1998-2002)**

Within the 5th Framework Programme for Research (1998-2002) research related to forestry and the forest-based industries at EU level has been carried out mainly by the Quality-of-Life programme (QoL), and over 60 research projects involving more than 500 participants have been implemented over the period 1998-2002. Further projects related to forests and wood fibres in the broadest sense have also been implemented under the Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development (EESD) programme, as well as the Competitive and Sustainable Growth (GROWTH) programme. In the horizontal programmes, the main contributor in terms of funding forestry research has been the dedicated international co-operation programme (INCO). Through the above-mentioned programmes 122 projects have been funded with an EC-contribution of about 142 million EURO and a total cost of 220 million EURO.

**The main objective of research in the forest sector** has been to **improve the sustainable production and rational utilisation** of goods and services of natural resources within Europe and in developing countries, with a special emphasis on new technologies, including biotechnology and multidisciplinary, integrated approaches. **Through this approach competitiveness will be increased**, with its direct implications for:

- employment and conditions in rural areas
- reduction of the vulnerability of the relevant sectors through diversification;
- the response to societal demands for sound environmental practices, and
- sustainable production of renewable resources.

In FP5, Agriculture, forestry and aquaculture were all taken care of under the "Quality of Life" programme with four important forestry biodiversity projects financed :

- Nature based management of beech in Europe with a multifunctional approach to forestry NAT-MAN <http://www.flec.kvl.dk/natman/>
- Implementing tree models as forest management tools ITM <http://www.boku.ac.at/itm/>
- Wood for energy - a contribution to the development of sustainable forest management WOOD-EN-MAN <http://www.flec.kvl.dk/wood-en-man/>
- Introduction of broadleaf species for sustainable forest management SUSTMAN <http://www.sustman.de/>

### **Review of ongoing Key Action 5.3 projects under the Fifth Framework Programme's Quality of Life programme**

The experts' general remarks were the following:

- good coverage of the KA5 work programme facilitating basic and applied research;
- good coverage of relevant economic species (broadleaf and conifer species);
- individual projects scattered in different programmes and calls for proposals prevented "clustering" and critical mass creation;
- efforts should be increased to ensure that applications developed from the projects will be transferred to all potential end-users.

The experts' remarks on the overall implementation can be summarised as follows:

- the vast majority of projects reviewed have either been completed or are progressing satisfactorily;
- important topics have been successfully addressed;
- management has mainly been satisfactory, but delays, where they occurred, could have been avoided through improved communication and management in general;
- there is a need to put more emphasis on the dissemination of findings;
- more effort must be put on training – so far, this has been limited to projects in pulp and paper;
- medium-term continuity of databases or websites is no longer guaranteed once the projects have ended, specific action may be needed to maintain access to project findings beyond the termination of the projects.

### **The 6th Framework programme for Research (2002-2006)**

The 6th Framework Programme (2002-2006) responds to a requirement resulting from the development of modern research in a global environment by organising co-operation at different levels, co-ordinating national or European policies, networking teams and increasing the mobility of individuals. The European Commission, Member States and the European Parliament, the scientific community and industry are now committed to work jointly towards the creation of a "European Research Area" (ERA).

In line with the ERA Communication, the aim of the 6th Framework Programme is to achieve both, a greater focus on questions of European importance and a better integration of research efforts. There is no longer one specific budget line dedicated to the forestry sector and topics related to the multifunctional management of forests and forest-based industries are now found in the work programmes of two different Thematic Priorities, Priority 6 "Sustainable development, global change and ecosystems" and Priority 3 "Nanotechnologies and nanosciences, knowledge-based multifunctional materials and new production processes and devices", and also in cross-cutting research activities, namely, research in support of Community policies, specific SME (small and medium enterprises) measures (Collective and Co-operative Research) and other horizontal activities such as networking of national or regional programmes (ERA-NET).

The international co-operation activities (INCO) in the FP6 will be expanded in scope by implementing them through the opening up of the thematic priorities to the rest of the world, through specific measures such as focusing on the "Rational use of natural resources/Managing humid and semi-humid ecosystems" (INCO FP6), and the international mobility for researchers. The COST programme will continue to further enhance the co-operation between and integration of scientists in the sector.

With the new structure and instruments of FP6, a comparable level of success has not yet been achieved for various reasons. The main reasons might be the size of the new instruments and the fact that opportunities for forestry and wood research are scattered throughout the framework programme rather than being focussed in a single area. Nevertheless, opportunities under Priority areas 3 and 6, under Scientific Support to Policy and the horizontal activities are still available under future calls.

The main focus of the sixth Framework Programme (2002-2006) is the creation of a European Research Area as a vision for the future of research in Europe. Forestry and forest-related issues will be addressed at the JRC (Joint Research Center) by continuing to provide scientific and technical support to client Directorate-Generals on issues of climate change, biodiversity and habitat loss, sustainable development, carbon sequestration, forest condition and forest protection and sustainable forestry in particular in the context of the Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) programme. Collaboration with research networks and scientists in the new member-countries will be strengthened as part of the JRC's specific action on enlargement.

In respect of all the things I said before, this meeting of the heads of European Research Centres is a very important step towards the necessary network and cooperation on European level. For this challenge I wish you the best success and a pleasant stay in Vienna.