

**1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of Heads of  
European National Forest Research Institutes  
in Vienna, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of July 2004**

Research, monitoring and knowledge transfer are vital preconditions for sustainable forest management (SFM) and a foresighted policy on forests, environment and sustainable development of rural and urban areas in Europe.

In most European countries, national forest research institutes (NFRI, synonymous with federal or state forest research institutes) are important pillars of national research activities, covering research on forest ecosystems and their use, natural hazards, landscape issues and socio-economic aspects related e.g. to rural development. NFRIs are mainly responsible for forest monitoring in European countries and contribute to the reporting to international processes (MCPFE, biodiversity, carbon, forest soil). These institutions are also in the centre of knowledge transfer to the practitioners in the field as well as decision makers in policy and administration.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of July 2004, the heads of National Forest Research Institutes of MCPFE-countries convened in Vienna for their first meeting. At the meeting, representatives of Austria, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Serbia-Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, EFI (European Forest Institute), IUFRO (International Union of Forest Research Organisations) and MCPFE (Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe) discussed the present challenges, opportunities and problems of NFRIs.

Special topics discussed included i.a.:

- EU Policy fields related to forest research
- Future challenges for forest research in Europe
- New approaches to organise NFRIs
- Managing NFRIs
- Follow up of the Meeting

In the discussion it was emphasized that

1. The focus of forestry has widened from primary production to a comprehensive understanding of forest ecosystems and their sustainable use, aiming at a broad spectrum of wood and non-wood goods, environmental and social benefits and services.
2. The forestry sector is increasingly influenced by intersectoral policies and it is no more fully recognised as an economic sector that requires holistic policy formulation. Special attention has to be paid to mitigating the potential negative consequences of this fact.
3. In accordance with this development, traditional forest research issues have broadened and new research tasks are emerging. Improvement in the well-being of people (e.g. security and human health) are important issues for future forest research. Forest science can offer important contributions to the whole scientific community and for the ongoing European processes.
4. The opportunities for forest research within the EU Framework Programmes for R&D do exist but are scattered. The potential volume of forest research within the EU Framework Programmes is decreasing, although forests are of increasing importance for the development of Europe towards a sustainable society.
5. Activities and measures are needed to maximise the potentials of NFRIs to serve the European societies. To meet the current and future research demands, new organisation models and novel approaches to transnational co-operation and co-ordination between NFRIs are needed. These include e.g. innovative utilisation of information technologies, harmonisation of monitoring and reporting routines, sharing research infrastructures, consolidation of the links to the other research sectors etc.

The heads agreed on the following next steps:

- The NFRIs together, with EFI as co-ordinator, will start an initiative for a better integration of forest research within the upcoming 7th EU Framework Programme for R&D, inviting other institutions and organisations to participate in this effort.
- A draft on processes and criteria for performance measurement of NFRIs will be elaborated.
- The next regular meeting of heads of European NFRIs will be held in July 2006 in Riga, Latvia.

More information on the meeting including all presentations and the minutes are available via Internet on: [http://bfw.ac.at/iyfw/imh\\_intro.html](http://bfw.ac.at/iyfw/imh_intro.html)