



## **Mid Term Evaluation of COST Action E19**

### ***National Forest Programmes in a European Context***

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This report is a Mid-Term evaluation of COST Action E19 'National Forest Programmes in a European Context' of the COST Programme of Forests and Forestry Products (FFP).

## **BACKGROUND**

COST E19 has as its main objective to provide policy makers in Europe with improved means for formulating and implementing national forest programmes. The Action E19 started in October 1999 and is planned to run for four years.

## **OBJECTIVE OF MID –TERM EVALUATION**

In this evaluation, the objectives were:

- To evaluate the progress of Action E19 as specified in the Memorandum of Understanding
- To carry out a preliminary impact assessment
- Provide comments and recommendations.

## **MID-TERM EVALUATION**

### **Evaluation Team**

The FFP sector Groups Forestry and Pulp and Paper appointed the evaluation team at its meeting of 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> March 2001 in Brussels, Belgium.

The Evaluation team included:

- Prof. Dr Axel Roeder, Research Institute for Forest Ecology and Forestry, Rheinland-Pfalz, Trippstadt-Schloß, Germany
- Dr Jos Evertsen, Enterprise Ireland, Science Innovation, Glasnevin, Dublin, Ireland.
- Mr Arne Been, European Commission, DG Research, COST Secretariat, B-7 3/26, 200 Rue de la Loi, 1049 Brussels, Belgium.

Both Dr Roeder and Dr Evertsen are members of the COST Technical Committee on Forests and Forestry Products, Sector Group Forestry and Sector Group Pulp and Paper respectively. In the selection of the Evaluation Team, a conscious decision was made to select from Sector Group members who had no involvement with COST Action E19.

### **Evaluation Procedure and Timetable.**

The major focus of the mid term evaluation was the Workshop held for the Action in during 13 – 15 September 2001 in Oslo, Norway. The members of the evaluation team attended the workshop to sit in on the programme and associated management and working group meetings, solicit views of attendees and participants and to discuss the progress of the action with the chairperson(s) of the action and working groups.

Support documentation was obtained from the COST Secretariat and ACTION E19 website.

A Mid-term Evaluation report was to be prepared for presentation at the next FFP TC meeting scheduled for 24 and 25 October 2001 in Oslo, Norway.

## Assessment Method

The assessment followed basic outline used in the evaluations of previous Pulp and Paper Actions i.e. E7 and E11.

The assessment of the information gathered was carried out against the background of the COST Action E19 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

## Reports

A listing of all the reports received, retrieved from the E19 website and used is given in Appendix 1.

The activities at the MC and WG meetings were evaluated for:

- content and variety
- the level and extent of participation by national delegates
- the level of 'between-meeting' actions, encouraging European networking of national programmes and activities

All reports were received from the COST Secretariat and from the E19 website.

## Questionnaires

A questionnaire was issued to all the participants in the Action during the Workshop. All returned questionnaires were assessed and scored. A simple frequency expressed as a percentage of total number of returns was recorded Appendix 2.

## Workshop

The Munich workshop was not confined to national delegates. To assess the impact and significance of the Action to the wider European interest, information was gathered on the workshop programme, its content, attendance and participation.

## DESCRIPTION OF COST ACTION E19

According to the Memorandum of Understanding, July 1999, the main objective is; *to provide policy makers in Europe with improved means for formulating and implementing national forest programmes<sup>1</sup>.*

The secondary objectives of the Action include:

1. *to set up a network of European researchers who deal with the socio-economic aspects of SFM and policy planning in forestry;*
2. *to specify the commonalties and differences of the operational definitions of SFM at the national and sub-national levels in European countries;*
3. *to specify the existing understanding and definition of NFPs in European countries;*
4. *to specify the interpretation of the individual IPF basic elements of NFPs in European countries and to elaborate commonalties and differences;*
5. *to stimulate the exchange of evaluation research on existing NFPs and formulation of new research topics on the significance of NFPs in comparison to other policy tools;*
6. *to investigate the chances of implementation of NFPs..*

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<sup>1</sup> All text in *Italics* are direct quotations from the Memorandum of Understanding and / or Action19 documentation.

The expected benefits from the Action are:

1. *to specify and interpret the elements of an NFP;*
2. *to specify the procedural requirements of formulation and implementation of an NFP in terms of enhancing the rationality of policies, ensuring long-term orientation, and improving coordination of political actors;*
3. *to evaluate the significance of NFPs in comparison to other policy means;*
4. *to assess supportive and impeding factors for the development of substantial NFPs.*

Scientific areas are to focus on:

1. *Specification of the elements and procedural requirements of an NFP which could serve as a blue-print for an individual European country*
2. *Evaluation of the significance of NFPs in comparison to other policy means.*

Types of activities, which would be considered to achieve the objectives, include

- *Arranging state-of-the-art conferences and workshops etc*
- *Exchange of experts, scientists and graduate students for training*
- *Exchange of reports and publications, experimental procedures*
- *Joint projects in specific areas.*

## **RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION**

### **1. Structure of Action**

The structure of the Action has remained unchanged. Two Work Groups are active:

- Work Group 1 – ‘Elements and procedural requirements of NFPs’
- Work Group 2 – ‘Influence factors of substantive NFPs’.

The chairperson of Work Group 1 was replaced during the current Workgroup 1 meeting.

### **2. Main points of Evaluation – Questionnaire & Interviews**

One short questionnaire was issued on the first day of the workshop and all participants (members of the Action E19) were asked to complete and return the questionnaire. 32 questionnaires were returned (approximately 75%) and analysed. A tabularised and graphical representation of results are given in Appendix 2.

In addition, 8 interviews were held. The template of questions (Appendix 3) was based on the objectives set out in the MoU. We tried to get a fairly good distribution by geographical region, working group membership and the areas of expertise. The questionnaires and interviews were analysed separately. The results of the questionnaire and the interviews were combined and are presented below, including some specific comments from the interviews and the questionnaires.

## **RESULTS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE AND INTERVIEWS.**

### **1. Achievement of Objectives**

Main objective - *'to provide policy makers in Europe with improved means for formulating and implementing national forest programmes'*.

Assessment:

Evaluation Team: Good

Respondents: Good

Good progress has been made and it is expected that the full primary objective and all secondary objectives should be achieved. Good progress has been made in developing the understanding of the National Forest Programme (NFP) concept. Further development is required to bring together the theoretical concepts and the methods for implementation. An improved interaction has been developed between the research scientists and the policymakers and is expected that this will foster the development / implementation of NFPs.

There appears quite a gap between the 'leader countries' and the 'learning countries'. In order to optimise the potential of this Action, the management of this Action should strongly encourage the use and development of the NFP across Europe. A mentoring approach could be beneficial, using the STSM as their TT medium.

At the WG level the members of both work groups felt that a greater interaction is required from this point forward. To date each of the work groups have been pursuing their own work programmes with limited interaction.

#### ***Recommendation:***

To endeavour to achieve the specified benefits of the Action for all, and especially the 'learning countries', it may be necessary to formulate a method of development / implementation of the NFP concept for the participant countries.

### **2. Value Added Aspects**

Assessment overall:

Evaluation Team: good/fairly good

Respondents: good/fairly good

Several factors are used as quantifiable indicators of measuring the level of achieving value adding to the scientific community. These factors include:

2.1 Contacts

2.2 New projects

2.3 Value of new projects

2.4 Joint publications

**Assessment CONTACTS:**

Evaluation Team: good

Respondents: good

The number of new contacts made is reflected in the table below. Partially due to the interdisciplinary composition of scientists and policy makers, the number of new contacts made is high. As per COST objective networking of European experts is successfully achieved.

MANY	SOME	FEW	NONE	Total
22	8	2	0	32
69%	25%	6%	0%	100%

**Assessment NEW PROJECTS:**

Evaluation Team: good

Respondents: good

>3	3	2	1	None	Total
0	3	3	10	16	32
0%	9%	9%	31%	50%	100%

The numbers of new projects, including members of the Action, are starting. Considering the Action is mid-term, this can be considered good progress.

**Assessment NEW PROJECT VALUE:**

Evaluation Team: good/fairly good

Respondents: good/fairly good

>500	>100	>50	>10	Other	Total
2	1	5	3	6	17
12%	6%	29%	18%	35%	100%

The average value of any one project is between €10 – 50,000, which is a reasonable value for the initiation of a research initiative.

**Assessment JOINT PUBLICATION:**

Evaluation Team: good/fairly good

Respondents: good/fairly good

>3	3	2	1	None	Total
0	0	8	9	15	32
0%	0%	25%	28%	47%	100%

The number of joint publications has started well and appears to be on the increase. If this trend continues, the result should be a very acceptable achievement for partner collaboration.

**Recommendation:**

The successful networking of new contacts should be further exploited in through the integration of the 'learning countries' into new projects.

### 3. Management Aspects

Assessment:

Evaluation Team: good

Respondents: good/excellent

EXCEL	GOOD	F GOOD	POOR	BAD	Total
8	17	5	1	0	31
26%	55%	16%	3%	0%	100%

The feedback from the membership through the questionnaires and the interviews have indicated that the management of the Action is effective. Open management of an Action such as this with a great diversity of backgrounds is required in order to achieve the objectives set out.

The Evaluation team assessed the effectiveness of the management only during the Oslo workshop.

#### **Recommendation:**

Maintain at current good level, however ensure that the 'learning countries' group is included in the development of the Action.

### 4. Dissemination Aspects

Expected benefits:

- Exchange of reports, publications, experimental procedures
- Transfer of knowledge between European research institutions

Assessment:

Evaluation Team: good/fairly good

Respondents: good

EXCEL	GOOD	F GOOD	POOR	BAD	Total
5	22	4	1	0	32
16%	69%	13%	3%	0%	100%

The Action has opened a website and uses this to post details of this Action, its activities and the relevant documents. In preparing for the Mid-term evaluation, the Evaluation team used this medium to great benefit.

Meeting records are good and informative. Details on workshops are good, however the productions of workshop proceedings from the Edinburgh meeting are slow.

Some countries have already started to include the NFP concept in their national forestry programmes.

There was a strong opinion that the gap between the theoretical development of the NFP concept and the empirical approach should be bridged. Examples that were proposed by the members included:

- introduce more practical examples / approach, such as forestry practices concerns and analyze the structure and performance of NFPs
- better defined outputs for policymakers
- balance between "policymaking" and science
- better utilisation of the diversity and skills available amongst the participants as part of a learning process.

***Recommendations:***

Maintain the level of communication through the website. Maintenance / updating of the website is important. Address the deficits to bring together the theory and empirical understandings of the NFP concept.

**5. Participation Aspects**

Type of activities which may be considered:

- arranging workshops, conferences, seminars etc
- exchange of experts, scientists and graduate students for training
- exchange of reports etc

Evaluation team: good overall

Respondents: good

The overall participation in the Action is very good with good European dimension.

The level of STSM participation is low and should be improved.

***Recommendation:***

A pro-active approach may need to be adopted by the MC, as opposed to waiting for candidates to apply. The MC may consider the adaptation of a strategy of STSM whereby 'learning country' participants are systematically placed with leaders in the 'leader countries'.

**6. Economic Aspects**

Assessment:

Evaluation Team: good

Respondents: good

This aspect of the evaluation is very difficult and has been noted by other evaluators there are no guidelines by which to assess the financial impact, benefits and performance of a COST action.

***Recommendation:***

If an assessment of Economic Aspects is to be included in all future evaluations, there needs to be some guidelines available from the COST Secretariat that enable some level of uniformity between assessments to be made.

## **OVERALL ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSIONS**

Both the Evaluation Team and the Respondents rated the overall Action as Good. It is deemed to be a successful action. There are, however, some issues that do require attention. Amongst those referred to, the issues of increased networking between Work group 1 and 2 and a significant improvement in the take up of STSM are those that require the most attention.

The action has been successful in developing the NFP concept and methodology especially amongst those who can be considered to be the 'lead countries'. The challenge for the Action MC is to transfer this capability in some form to the 'learning countries'. If the NFP concept is to succeed or impact at a trans-European level, than a wide inclusiveness will be required. Furthermore there is a significant wish by the membership that the gap between theoretical and empirical approaches in the development of the NFP concept should be addressed.

## EVALUATION TEAM REPORT AUTHORISATION

Signed

Signed

Date  
26.10.01

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26.10.01

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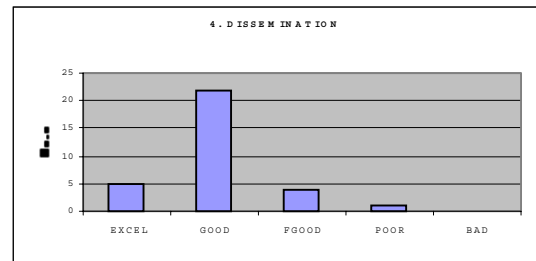
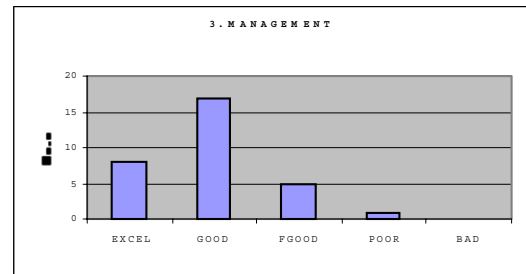
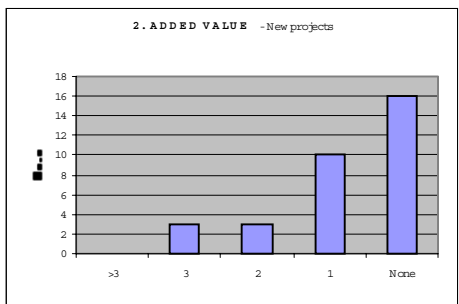
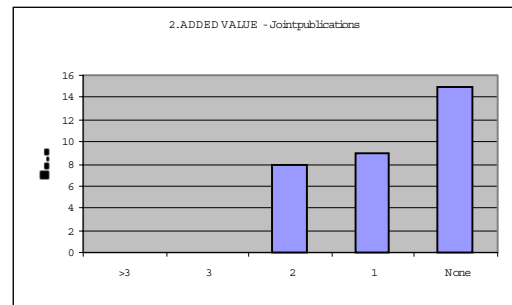
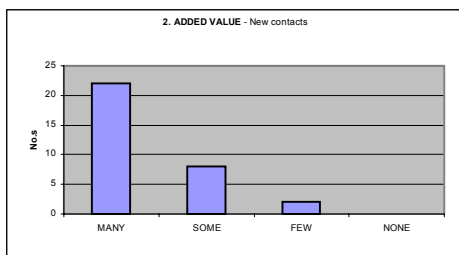
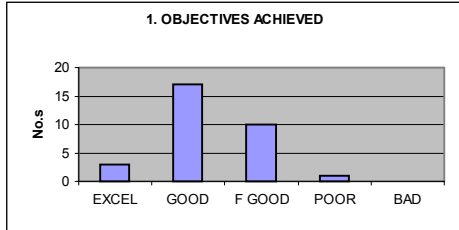
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## **APPENDIX 1 – LISTING OF DOCUMENTS USED IN THE ASSESSMENT.**

- 1 Pre-MC minutes 21 June, 1999. Joensuu. Finland.
- 2 MC Meeting 1 18 – 19 October, 1999. Brussels. Belgium.
- 3 MC Meeting 2 20 – 21 March, 2000. Freiburg. Germany.
- 4 MC Meeting 3 20 October, 2000. Madrid. Spain.
- 5 MC Meeting 4 31 March, 2001. Aberdeen. United Kingdom.
- 6 COST Action 19 Evaluation Report 6 September, 2001. Oslo. Norway.
- 7 All other WG meeting notes which were held in association with the MC meetings, are available from the E19 website.

## APPENDIX 2 - GRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION OF THE RETURNED QUESTIONNAIRES.



## **APPENDIX 3 – TEMPLATE OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRES.**

### **1 Achievements of the objectives.**

- a Improved means for formulating and implementing of NFP.*
- b Network of specialist researchers.*
- c Operational definitions of sustainable forest management.*
- d Understanding of NFPs in European countries.*
- e Intergovernment Forest Panel, basic elements included in NFP.*
- f Stimulate exchange of research on existing NFPs.*
- g Investigate the chances of implementation.*

### **2 Value added to the Action**

- a Have new National projects and / or initiatives been generated as a result of this Action.*
- b Have new European projects and / or initiatives been generated as a result of this Action.*

### **3 Management of the Action.**

- a Overall management of the project.*
- b Organisation of meetings.*
- c Distribution of documents / minutes of meetings etc.*

### **4 Dissemination aspects**

- a Publications from meetings.*
- b Accessibility of documents.*
- c Publicity and marketing.*

### **5 Participation aspects**

- a European country participation.*
- b Short-term Scientific Missions.*

### **6 What role should the COST Scientific Secretariat have?**

= Sci Secr can act as a business administrator to smoothen admin processes OR can act as a moderator & promoter of interactions between the activities.

### **7 What is your overall opinion on this COST Action? (Improvement, changes, follow-up etc)**

## **APPENDIX 4 – SUPPLEMENTARY SUMMARY OF COMMENTS TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND INTERVIEWS:**

“What would you improve in this Action?” (questionnaire)

“What is your overall opinion on this COST Action?” (interview question)

As regards **communication** within the Action:

- distribution of planned papers timely before the respective meeting
- post-meeting documents should be timely disseminated as well (i.e. Working Group minutes, proceedings)

As regards **engagement** of Action members:

- all members should be engaged in the Action
- some members of the Working Groups contribute in a very limited way to the work of this Action

As regards **management** of the Action:

- more consensus-seeking on the scientific program of the Action (would probably increase the motivation of some Action members)
- agree more what to concentrate on, i.e. in Working Group 2
- Management Committee meetings should be better used to discuss the Action management
- problem in continuity with the changing of Working Group chairpersons
- better balance between external presentations of papers and WG activities (i.e. more time for Working Group meetings)
- timely reimbursement of costs

Appendix 4 was carried out by Johannes Voitleithner based on written statements received from the Mid Term Evaluation team.