

## **Memorandum of Understanding**

### **for the implementation of a European Concerted Research Action designated as COST Action E19 "National Forest Programmes in a European Context"**

The Signatories to this Memorandum of Understanding, declaring their common intention to participate in the concerted Action referred to above and described in the Technical Annex to the Memorandum, have reached the following understanding:

1. The Action will be carried out in accordance with the provisions of document COST 400/94 "Rules and Procedures for Implementing COST Actions", the contents of which are fully known to the Signatories.
2. The main objective of this COST Action is to provide policy makers in Europe with improved means for formulating and implementing national forest programmes.
3. The overall cost of the activities carried out under the Action has been estimated, on the basis of information available during the planning of the Action, at ECU 1.9 million at 1998 prices.
4. The Memorandum of Understanding will take effect on being signed by at least five Signatories.
5. The Memorandum of Understanding will remain in force for a period of four years, unless the duration of the Action is modified according to the provisions of Chapter 6 of the document referred to in Point 1 above.

## **TECHNICAL ANNEX**

COST Action E19 National Forest Programmes in a European Context

### **A. BACKGROUND**

#### ***1. International deliberations on forests***

For almost six years, the discussion pertaining to the establishment of national forest programmes (NFP) has been on-going in international negotiations for sustainable management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. In Chapter 11 on "Combating Deforestation" of Agenda 21 it is stated that national states should work to prepare and implement national forestry programmes for the sustainable management, conservation and sustainable development of forests, in short sustainable forest management (SFM).

The formulation and implementation of NFPs became also a main topic of the sessions of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF). It has been on the agenda since its second session and remained there until the final report of IPF to the UN Commission of Sustainable Development (CSD). One reads that the Panel "encouraged countries, in accordance with their national sovereignty, specific country conditions and national legislation, to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate national forest programmes, which include a wide range of approaches for sustainable forest management, taking into consideration the following: consistency with appropriate international agreements; partnership and participatory mechanisms to involve interested parties; recognition and respect for customary and traditional rights of, inter alia, indigenous people and local communities; secure land tenure arrangements; holistic, intersectoral and iterative approaches; ecosystem approaches that integrate the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of biological resources; and adequate provision and valuation of forest goods and services;".

Out of the great many proposals for action of the IPF process only a few were agreed by the CSD in its fifth session in April 1997 and the UN Special General Assembly in June 1997. Both conferences encouraged countries again to develop national forest programmes in accordance with their respective national conditions, objectives and priorities.

According to its mandate, the formulation and implementation of NFPs will also be one of the focal points of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF). The IFF was established under the auspices of the CSD to continue the intergovernmental policy dialogue on forests after IPF's mandate had expired. The Forum's tasks are to facilitate implementation of IPF's proposals (e.g., Six-Country Initiative on NFPs), review and monitor progress on SFM, and consider matters left pending by the IPF (e.g., an international legally binding instrument on forests).

## **2. Principal elements of NFPs**

Though quite a number of European countries have differing long experience with national forest programmes (e.g., Finland, Greece, Italy, Slovakia, Slovenia), the term is usually attributed to a planning instrument employed in developing countries, and it is known as Tropical Forestry Action Plans (later renamed into Tropical Forest Action Programme), National Forestry Action Programme, Forestry Sector Reviews, Forestry Master Plans, etc. Whatever the name of this planning instrument is, it serves to set and prioritize goals, specify appropriate means and actors, implement the means and evaluate the impacts and outcome as regards the set goals. In this sense, NFPs can be described as a generic expression for a wide range of approaches to the process of planning, programming, and implementing forest activities in countries. The novelty of NFPs consists in the focus on SFM and the comprehensive forest policy framework applicable at the national and sub-national levels. The latter consists of basic principles developed by FAO (1996) which are very similar to the principle elements of the IPF process. These principles are the following:

- national sovereignty and country leadership;
- partnership and appropriate participatory mechanisms to involve all interested parties;
- decentralisation, where applicable;
- empowerment of regional and local governments;
- recognition and respect for customary and traditional rights of, inter alia, indigenous people, local communities, forest dwellers and forest owners;
- secure land tenure arrangements;
- long-term iterative process;
- consistency with national policies and international commitments;
- integration with the country's sustainable development strategies;
- holistic and intersectoral.

## **3. NFPs for enhancing policy planning**

The concept of NFP prescribes a holistic, integrated policy approach adaptive to changing or new conditions and propagates an ideal democratic approach to planning processes, thereby emphasising participative, decentralised and respectful processes which are acceptable to all involved parties. Its promises are similar to those of the sixties when policy planning was regarded as the key tool for making political decisions more rational. At that time, policy planning strove to accomplish at least the following three objectives:

- to enhance the rationality of policies;
- to ensure long-term orientation of policies; and
- to better coordinate the decisions of various political actors.

The concept of policy planning employed at that time was technocratic-oriented and had to fail, partly as a result of negligence of systemic restrictions. Today we know more about the policy making process which enables us to better meet the demands of policy planning. In Table 1 the new general paradigm of policy planning is compared with the principle elements of NFPs described above allocated to one of the three objectives of policy planning. The first element refers to national responsibility. Elements 2-6 contribute to the rationality of policies; element 7 ensures long-term orientation of policies; and elements 8-10 refer to the coordination of political actors (Table 1).

**Table 1: Policy planning**

Objectives	General paradigm	National Forest Programme
Enhancing the rationality of policies	policy networks and bargaining systems participation of all relevant actors	participatory mechanisms decentralisation empowerment of regional and local governments respect for local communities secure land tenure arrangements
Ensuring long-term orientation	fragmentation of the long-term strategy into an iterative planning process review and assessment of the achieved goals	long-term iterative process
Improving coordination of political actors	consensus building processes via information and persuasion strategies inner-bureaucratic intermediation processes and capacity building	consistency with national policies and international commitments integration with the country's sustainable development strategies holistic and intersectoral

#### **4. The need for European coordination**

From the point of view of formulating and implementing NFPs in a European context the concept suffers from three facts: lack of an operational European definition of SFM, differing interpretation of the individual elements of NFPs by countries, and disappointing experiences with technocratic-oriented policy planning in the sixties.

The signatory states of the Third Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe held in June 1998 in Lisbon have committed themselves in Resolution L2 to endorse the Helsinki criteria and indicators as well as the "Pan-European Operational Level Guidelines for Sustainable Forest Management". This can be regarded as a good precondition for developing national operational definitions of SFM in accordance with the Pan-European agreements.

The principle elements of NFPs such as "appropriate participatory mechanisms", "holistic and intersectoral" are not at all uncontested. They need further deliberations between and within countries.

The chances of NFPs to make substantial contributions to the enhancement of SFM will very much depend on the capability of a country to agree on an operational definition of SFM, the existence of an international legally binding instrument on forests, pressure from outside, financial incentives, and the structure of decision-making.

Though all three aspects have to be left to further political deliberations of the sovereign European countries, socio-economic and political sciences at the European level can contribute to the enduring bargaining process in many ways.

#### **5. Interfaces**

NFPs are well established policy tools for the South whereas they are rather new for many countries of the North. Accordingly, the "Basic principles and operational guidelines for formulation, execution and revision of national forest programmes" of FAO (1996) are tailored to the preparation of a coordinated forest strategy of developing countries and its implementation with support of the donor community. In a European context, NFPs can serve as an instrument for legitimizing state policy by reconciling the differing interests in forests. Thus, the FAO Guidelines have to be carefully examined and modified according to the European needs.

Due to the rich experience of developing countries with NFPs the work on European guidelines for the formulation and implementation of NFPs can take advantage from close cooperation with the South. This expectation is expressed by the government-sponsored Six-Country Initiative on NFPs of IFF, consisting of Finland, Germany, Honduras, Indonesia, Uganda, and the United Kingdom. A similar non-political but

purely scientific cooperation took place in the International Seminar on Formulation and Implementation of National Forest Programmes held from 18-20 May 1998 in Freiburg i.B., Germany. At the basis of this seminar a follow-up seminar will be held in June 1999 in Joensuu, organised by the European Forest Institute (EFI) and open to all interested people from forest and environmental administration, interest groups and research institutes.

## B. OBJECTIVES AND BENEFITS

*The main objective of this COST Action is to provide policy makers in Europe with improved means for formulating and implementing national forest programmes.*

*Secondary objectives* are the following:

- to set up a network of European researchers who deal with the socio-economic aspects of SFM and policy planning in forestry;
- to specify the commonalities and differences of the operational definitions of SFM at the national and sub-national levels in European countries;
- to specify the existing understanding and definition of NFPs in European countries;
- to specify the interpretation of the individual IPF basic elements of NFPs in European countries and to elaborate commonalities and differences;
- 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;
- to investigate the chances of implementation of NFPs.

The *expected benefits* are the following:

- to specify and interpret the elements of an NFP;
- 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;
- to evaluate the significance of NFPs in comparison to other policy means;
- to assess supportive and impeding factors for the development of substantial NFPs.

## C. SCIENTIFIC PROGRAMME

The scientific work programme of the Action comprises the following two parts which could be tackled in two separate working groups:

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

Ad 1: The *specification of the elements and procedural requirements* of an NFP has to consider the following items of the FAO Guidelines and the IPF process (Table 1):

- *National sovereignty*

The preparation of an NFP is a national initiative for which each country must assume full leadership and responsibility. This follows from the *sovereign right* of states to use their forests according to their own environmental policies and development needs. However, many countries in Europe share some common peculiarities; for example in southern European countries, the challenge of combating forest fires; the EU member countries, the supra-national organisation; the timber exporting countries, the importance of the forest and forestry industries sector; the less densely forested countries, the need to reforest, etc.

- *Goal definition*

The overall goal of an NFP is to ensure SFM at the national and sub-national levels in accordance with the Helsinki Resolution H1 on SFM and other international commitments. As the Helsinki definition of SFM is rather general and vague many interpretations are possible.

- *Coverage*

NFPs refer to forests, forestry and the forestry sector in their broadest senses.

"Forests" encompass all components of the forest ecosystem in accordance with the definition of forests in the individual country.

"Forestry" or the "forest sector" refers to all forest or forest-related activities of human beings. This includes everything related to the growing, harvesting and wise use of forest products, notably both wood and non-wood products (e.g., conservation of flora and fauna found in the forests; protection of soils, landscapes, heritage sites, and watersheds; forest-based tourism and national parks) and their main influence factors.

- *Enhancing the rationality of policies*

Contrary to the old paradigm of policy planning which assumes hierarchical relationship between state and society, the new paradigm focuses on governance processes taking place in policy networks or bargaining systems. These are informal groups of political actors of the policy making process. The participatory principle makes sure that all relevant actors are involved in the planning process.

The IPF proposals for the development of NFPs are also based on the principle of developing a new and equitable partnership. Thus, an NFP will strive to bring together all relevant stakeholders at the local, regional, national, and international levels. Appropriate participatory mechanisms should ensure that all stakeholders participate in the planning process. Secure land tenure arrangements ensure not to overuse natural resources.

- *Ensuring long-term orientation*

As forecasts of future developments and goals fail from the lack of hypotheses and knowledge about values and inventions affecting economic and societal developments, the long-term vision of a strategy is fragmented into medium-term action plans and short-term programmes. The development of the strategy is reviewed and assessed several times within the long planning horizon.

Accordingly, the IPF regards national forest planning as a long-term iterative process. The chance to learn from the policy making process and to reset goals and preferences enables the political actors to respond to the changing environment in an adaptive way. It is the basis of policy learning and policy change.

- *Improving coordination of political actors*

Policy planning depends on political consensus; it cannot technocratically replace a lack of political consensus. However, political consensus is not natural law. Consensus builds up and decays; it can be manipulated; and it can be build up and destroyed by means of information and persuasion strategies. In some cases like the dissemination of the notion of SFM these strategies may fail because it is hard to make the topic visible. Then inner-bureaucratic intermediation processes through education, training, research, development of reliable data, etc. have to be strengthened.

Coordination of political actors in developing NFPs should ensure that they are comprehensive, holistic and intersectoral, comprising all sectors affecting forestry and affected by forestry, including land-use planning. Furthermore, NFPs have to be consistent with national policies and international commitments and integrated with the country's sustainable development strategies.

The working group will conclude with a comparison of the definition of SFM and the interpretation of the IPF basic elements of NFPs in the collaborating European countries. The common denominator could serve as a blue-print for an NFP ensuring SFM which can be applied by any European country. The contentious elements have to be left to further political deliberations.

Ad 2: The *evaluation of the significance* of NFPs in comparison to other policy means can learn from the evaluation of existing NFPs in countries that have experience with this planning instrument. The wide support that the notion of NFPs has received during the IPF process, however, raises the question whether an NFP is a promising policy means for anticipative conflict resolution or just a symbolic policy capsule lacking content. The answer to this question will much depend on the national agreement on a definition of SFM in accordance with international commitments. Other supportive factors for the development of substantial NFPs are pressure from outside, financial incentives requiring an NFP and multi-level governance. However, it cannot be excluded that the notion of NFP may remain a panacea if

the frontiers between foresters and their counter-players are unbridgeable. In the following these research topics are shortly described:

- *Internationally legally binding instruments on forests*

During the two-year deliberations of the IPF NFPs as well as an international legally binding instrument on forests were fixed items of the agenda. In fact, both themes cannot be separated from each other because they are mutually dependent. NFPs could receive a definition of SFM from an international legally binding instrument on forests. On the other hand, NFPs are the core piece of any global forest convention for implementing SFM at the national level.

- *Pressure from outside*

Planning is a usually non-binding policy tool which tries to avoid conflicts of interest in the future by anticipative measures. This always means restrictions to powerful stakeholders whose action plans have to be coordinated with those of others. As long as the powerful take advantage from the present situation which is not at all satisfactory for the public, they will not be prepared to voluntarily change their policies. However, lessons can be learned from environmental politics as to the circumstances under which the problem makers are prepared to integrate their actions into an overall policy concept. In Japan, where the environmental disasters peaked in the 1970ies, industry was prepared to make far reaching concessions. This was the start for the development of a number of policy tools embedded in a national environment plan. A similar situation occurred in the Netherlands since the 1980ies. Pollution problems caused by agriculture and industry created so much resistance by citizens that the industry became the leading force pleading for the development of the Dutch National Environment Plan.

- *Financial incentives*

Financial incentives are given by the state for stimulating the provision of specific products and services when there is no market. In forestry they are applied at both the national and supra-national level of the European Union. The mechanism is always the same: the donor institution specifies a certain goal and specific measures for achieving it, the recipient declares to follow this goal and to take the measures for a certain amount of money. Usually the agreement is formally expressed by a contract. As regards ensuring SFM at the national level it is quite usual to provide financial incentives to the forest owners so that they take care of biological diversity, etc. in their forest management activities. In a similar way it is conceivable that the European Union applies financial incentives to national governments if they follow a certain desired course of action. In the ongoing process of developing a European forest strategy NFPs could be a much promising instrument for ensuring SFM, strengthening rural areas, etc. The concession of the member states could be alleviated by subsidies available for these forest owners who are prepared to take the specific measures presented in the NFP.

- *Multi-level governance*

The United States of America and the Federal Republic of Germany have in common that the responsibility for forests lies with the provinces. The same proves true for the European Union and its member states. Forest agencies at the lower level may be afraid of giving up responsibilities in favour of the upper level if they are forced to coordinate and integrate their plans into a master programme. The potential of newly established networks to become part of European governance structures depends on the following two conditions: firstly, on the readiness of participating stakeholders to cooperate, and secondly, on the competition with organisations fulfilling an important governance function at the national level. The stronger the neo-corporatistic cooperation between government and interest groups at the national level is, the less is the chance of the EU to establish a clientele through self-created networks.

- *Competing advocacy coalitions*

The definition of SFM is a pivotal element of an NFP. It depends on the ability of the political actors to come to an agreement. The advocacy coalition framework assumes that actors in a certain policy area can be aggregated into a number of "advocacy coalitions" composed of people from public and private organisations who share a set of normative and causal beliefs and who often act in concert for more than one decade. The advocacy coalition framework comprises a number of hypotheses which can be used to predict the probability of compromises between the competing advocacy coalitions.

The working group after thorough examination of all available hypotheses and theories will try to find an answer to the question of what can be done to avoid that NFPs are symbolic policy capsules without content. Probably new research topics will be formulated.

#### **D. ORGANISATION AND TIME-TABLE**

The *organisational structure* of the Action is depicted in Chart 1.

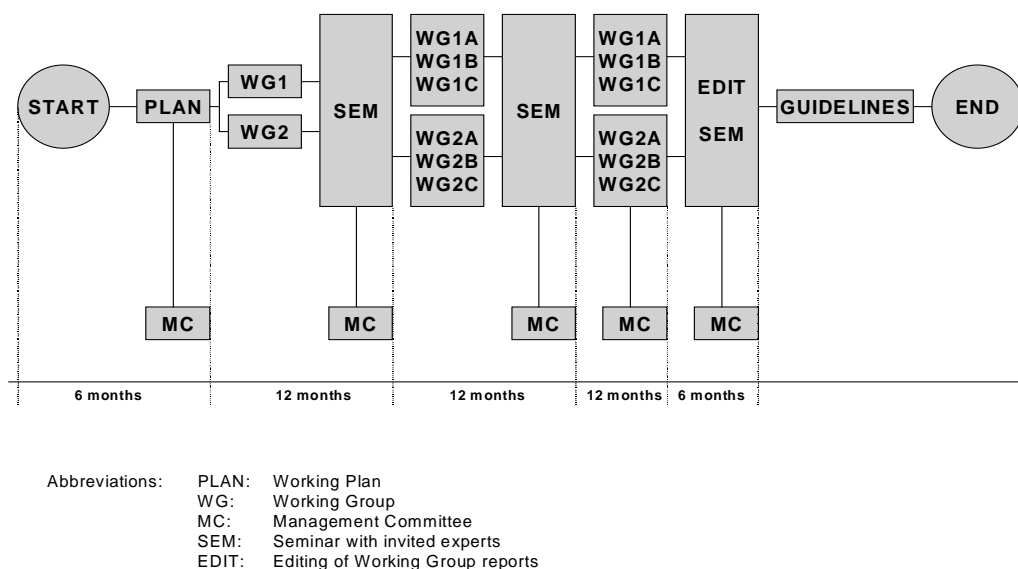
The Action will consist of two *working groups*, one of them dealing with the specification of the elements and procedural requirements of NFPs and one dealing with the evaluation of the significance of NFPs. After working group 1 has specified the main elements, it may temporarily split into several country sub-groups sharing common interests as regards NFPs. Similarly, Working Group 2 may break up into several sub-groups dealing with specific topics, such as policy change or multilevel governance. The academic background of scientists involved in both working groups should be in forest policy, political science or economics. The working groups will meet once or twice per year, depending on the need. Their findings will be published in two working group reports.

The evaluation of the significance of NFPs can highly benefit from experience in other fields of planning, in particular from National Forestry Action Programmes for developing countries, National Environmental Policy Plans in Europe and elsewhere, the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy, the Pan-European Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe and the recently established Intergovernmental Forum on Forests. It is assumed that contributions by representatives of these institutions and planning activities will encourage the Action's work. Thus, two *seminars with speakers invited* from other fields of planning are envisaged.

The *management Committee* will meet once a year in order to obtain information on the progress in the two working groups, to coordinate their work, to initiate cooperative programmes between the working groups as well as between the Action and potential users of NFPs for managing consistent short term scientific missions, and to set up an efficient European Internet-network of forest policy planning scientists. A website keeps contact between cooperating scientists and interested people from outside the Action.

The *duration* of the Action will be four years.

#### **Chart 1: Organisation and time table**



The *outcome* of the Action will be Guidelines for the formulation and implementation of NFPs for European countries based on the reports of the two working groups.

The *deliverables* of the Action are as follows:

Report by Working Group 1 on "Specification of the elements and procedural requirements of an NFP";

Report by Working Group 2 on "Evaluation of the significance of NFPs in comparison to other policy means";

Guidelines on the "Formulation and implementation of NFPs".

The *dissemination* of the main results of the Action will be provided by the following means:

- joint FAO/EFI seminar at the end of the Action;
- publication of the guidelines on formulation and implementation of NFPs in a European context;
- publication of the main reports of the two working groups;
- Internet homepage of the Action linked with the homepages of the cooperators;
- report to the Liaison Unit of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe.

## E. ECONOMIC DIMENSION

The following COST countries have actively participated in the preparation of the Action or otherwise indicated their interest: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and United Kingdom. In addition, Canada would be highly interested to participate in the Action.

On the basis of national estimates provided by the representatives of these countries and taking into account the coordination costs to be covered over the COST budget of the European Commission, the overall cost of the activities to be carried out under the Action has been estimated, in 1998 prices, at roughly ECU 1.9 Million. It is assumed that 35 person years will be involved in the Action.

This estimate is valid under the assumption that all the countries mentioned above but no other countries will participate in the Action. Any departure from this will change the total cost accordingly.

