

COST E19 HAS BEEN LAUNCHED

The COST Action E19 National Forest Programmes in a European Context was officially launched 30 June 1999, when the first five countries had confirmed their participation. By 30 December 1999, when the official signing time ended, 17 countries had joined the Action.

The first Management Committee (MC) meeting was held in Brussels 18-19 October 1999. Present were 11 countries and a total of 17 participants. Professor **Yves Birot** (F) from the COST Technical Committee Forests and Forestry Products welcomed the participants, and Dr. **Pentti Hyttinen** from the COST Secretariat gave a briefing of COST and chaired the beginning of the meeting.

Professor **Peter Glück** from the Agricultural University of Vienna BOKU, Austria was elected as the Chairperson of the Action and he chaired the final part of the meeting.

The meeting elected Dr. **Aarne Reunala** from the Finnish Forest Research Institute as the Vice-chairperson of the Action. Professor **Heiner Schanz** from Wageningen University, Netherlands, was elected as the Chairperson for the Working Group 1 "*Elements and procedural requirements of NFPs*" and Professor **Willi Zimmermann** from Zürich Technical University as Chairperson of Working Groups 2 "*Significance of NFPs as compared to other policy means*". These four chairpersons form the Steering Committee of the Action.

A draft work plan for the whole 4-year period of the Action was discussed and improved, and it will be approved in the next MC meeting in Freiburg, Germany 20-21 March 2000.

The Agricultural University of Vienna was chosen as the administrative institution for the Short-Term Scientific Missions, which receive annual special funding from the COST secretariat.

Professor **Noël Lust** from Belgium was elected as the Tutor of the Action. He assures the liaison of COST E19 with the Technical Committee Forests and Forestry Products.

THE OBJECTIVE OF COST E19

The objective of COST E19 is *to provide policy makers in Europe with improved means for formulating and implementing national forest programmes (NFP)*.

NFPs are a new tool for forest policy, widely approved in international and European forest policy processes. It is a challenging task for European researchers to participate in the development of NFPs

for improved sustainable management of European forests.

COST E19 aims at achieving this objective by arranging meetings and seminars for researchers in the field. Researchers transfer the new knowledge to national forest policy makers who deal with NFPs. COST E19 works also in close co-operation with the European Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests and other international forest policy institutions.

Chairman's word:**CHALLENGE TO RESEARCHERS**

National forest programmes (NFPs) go back to the Tropical Forestry Action Plans, which were launched in 1985 by international organisations for the developing world. They were expected to stop deforestation within five years by means of financial incentives. Unfortunately these plans failed - deforestation has even increased since then - but much experience regarding the strengths and weaknesses of political planning has been gained.

The international forest policy dialogue within the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and its follow-up, the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF), draw much attention to NFPs. IPF encouraged countries in its final session in 1997 to "develop, implement, monitor and evaluate national forest programmes." The development of NFPs was further endorsed by the UN Commission of Sustainable Development and the 19th Special Session of UNGAS 1997. FAO's Guidelines on the Formulation and Implementation of NFPs facilitated the understanding of NFPs and prepared their acceptance by European countries as well.

At the European level, one recognized that NFPs could help relieve the resolution of conflicting economic, ecological and social interests in forests which, in many cases, arise as a consequence of the new understanding of sustainable forest management. Based on the promising basic principles, in particular participation, continuous iterative process, holistic and inter-sectoral approach, one expects to render politics on forests more rational, more oriented to the long-term, and better coordinated.

Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe in Helsinki 1993 and Lisbon 1998 refer both to NFPs. At the level of the European Union, the Council recommends NFPs in its Forestry Strategy 1998 for the implementation of international commitments, principles and recommendations. Furthermore, NFPs are a prerequisite for acquiring forest

subsidies according to the EU Regulation on Support of Rural Areas within Agenda 2000.

The concept of NFPs still raises more questions than it solves. What is the definition of sustainable forest management, which NFPs are to ensure? What do we understand under participation, continuous iterative process, holistic and inter-sectoral approach and the other basic principles? Doubtless, the answers to these questions have far-reaching effects on the actors in the forest political arena and, therefore, are highly political questions, which have to be resolved on political grounds. However, as with many political issues, it was believed that science, in particular social sciences, could make a positive contribution to the development of NFPs in European countries.

When the proposal to launch a COST Action on NFPs in a European context was submitted to the COST Technical Committee on Forests and Forestry Products the first time in 1997, it was feared that NFPs were a primarily political topic to which science could not contribute very much. During the negotiation and review process, which lasted two years, another aspect became obvious: social scientists could become competitors of the existing political actors in the field of forest policy with their interpretations of sustainable forest management and the basic principles. Fortunately, during the review process the voices gained dominance, which expected positive contributions from social sciences to the political negotiation process and relied on the participating researchers to refrain themselves from policy making.

For these reasons COST Action E19 is more than a regular Action: First, it is a chance for social scientists to prove their potential in problem solving, and second, it is a challenge to researchers not to cross the borderline between science and politics. If we are successful as regards both aspects, we will be appreciated partners of the political actors on European forest policy, such as the Standing Forestry Committee of the DG Agriculture, the Liaison Unit of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, and the FAO/EC Timber Division in Geneva.

Peter Glück

17 COUNTRIES HAVE SIGNED

17 countries had by the official time limit of 30 December 1999 confirmed their participation to the Action. These countries are:

Austria	Germany	Norway
Belgium	Greece	Portugal
Czech Repulic	Hungary	Spain
Denmark	Ireland	Switzerland
Finland	Italy	United Kindom
France	Netherlands	

According to COST rules, it is possible to join the Action also later. Interested countries should declare their interest through their National COST Coordinator.

HOW RESEARCHERS CAN PARTICIPATE INTO COST E19?

Management Committee meetings. MC meets twice a year. There are one or two officially nominated MC delegates from each participating country.

Working Group meetings. COST E19 has two Working Groups: WG1 Elements and procedural requirements of NFPs, and WG2 Significance of NFPs. All interested researchers can participate into WG meetings. COST covers the travel expenses of one or two researchers per country.

Seminars. Seminars are open to all. COST can cover the travel costs of invited speakers and maximum of 4 researchers per country.

Short-Term Scientific Missions. Young researchers from participating institutions can benefit COST funding up to EUR 1500 for a mission abroad into another participating COST E19 institution. The duration of a mission can be from three days to one month. COST funding for these activities is coordinated by National MC members and the Steering Committee.

National networks. Because of limited funding, all interested researchers may not be able to participate into COST meetings and seminars. It is therefore recommended that MC members create national networks in order to assure timely flow of information to all interested researchers and institutions.

WHAT IS A NATIONAL FOREST PROGRAMME?

The concept of National Forest Programmes has received increasing attention in international forest policy processes since the Rio Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. The International Panel on Forests (IPF) defined NFPs as comprehensive forest policy frameworks for the achievement of sustainable forest management, based on a broad inter-sectoral approach, and implemented in the context of each country's socio-economic, cultural, political and environmental situation.

NFP basic principles are national sovereignty and country leadership, consistency with international agreements, partnership and participation, holistic and inter-sectoral approach and long-term iterative process. In 1998 the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe in Lisbon and the EU forest strategy both emphasised NFPs as basis for sustainable forest development.

According to a 1998-1999 FAO survey, NFPs are being implemented in most countries of the world,

also in most European countries. Because of the flexibility of the definition, applications vary widely.

COST E19 aims at developing NFPs suitable for European conditions. Research is needed especially concerning the new principles of participation, holism and inter-sectoral approaches, and on the comparison of NFPs with traditional forest policy tools.

WHAT IS COST?

COST is the acronym for European Co-operation in the Field of Scientific and Technical Research. It was founded in 1971, aiming at co-ordination of nationally funded research on a European level.

COST does not finance research projects, but creates co-operative networks for research, which is already carried out in participating countries.

The goal of COST is to ensure that Europe holds a strong position in scientific and technical research for peaceful purposes, by increasing European co-operation and interaction.

COST has developed into one of the largest frameworks for research co-operation in Europe. Its nearly 200 Actions involve some 40 000 participating scientists from 32 European member countries and from nearly 50 participating institutions from additional 14 countries. Research projects co-operating in COST Actions represent a value of more than EUR 2 Billion.

COST is based on a bottom-up principle: new Actions are proposed by scientists from member countries and approved by the Committee of Senior Officials. The Committee is composed of COST member states representatives, one of whom acts as National COST Co-ordinator.

The Actions are defined by a Memorandum of Understanding, which is signed by the Governments wishing to participate in the Action. The duration of an Action is generally 5 years. A Management Committee is in charge of the implementation, supervision and co-ordination of the Action. There are one or two members from each signatory country in the Management Committee. An average of EUR 50 000 to EUR 60 000 is available for co-ordination costs of an Action.

Technical Committees are responsible for a particular sector. They prepare proposals for new Actions, oversee the implementation of Actions and advise in the co-ordination and evaluation of Actions.

The DG Research of the European Commission offers the scientific and administrative secretariat for COST Actions and Technical Committees.

More information about COST in the net: <http://www.netmaniacs.com/cost/>.

COST FORESTRY ACTIONS

Forestry is quite new field within COST. The first Actions forwarded by the Technical Committee on

Forests and Forestry Products started in 1994. The Committee covers the whole forest-wood chain. In the following list the forestry Actions and integrated Actions are in bold:

E1 Paper recyclability (1994-1999)

E2 Wood durability (1994-1999)

E3 Forestry in the context of rural development (1994-1998)

E4 Forest reserves research network (FR-NET) (1995-1998)

E5 Timber frame building systems (1995-2000)

E6 EUROSILVA: Forest tree physiology research (1995-2000)

E7 Multi-phase flows in paper making (1996-1999)

E8 Mechanical performance of wood and wood products (1996-2000)

E9 Life cycle assessment of forestry and forest products (1997-2001)

E10 Wood properties for industrial use (1997-2001)

E11 Characterization methods for fibres and paper (1997-2001)

E12 Urban forests and trees (1997-2002)

E13 Wood adhesion and glued products (1998-2002)

E14 Towards zero effluent in paper making (1998-2002)

E15 Advances in the drying of wood (1998-2003)

E16 Bark and wood boring insects in living trees (1998-2002)

E17 Microbiology in paper making (1999-2003)

E18 High performance in wood coating (1999-2004)

E19 National forest programmes (1999-2003)

E20 Wood fibre cell wall structure (1999-2003)

E21 Contribution of forests and forestry to mitigate greenhouse effects (2000-)

E22 Environmental optimisation of wood protection (2000-).

OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG SCIENTISTS

COST E19 has opened the first call for Short-Term Scientific Missions for the year 2000.

The purpose of a Mission is to gain new experience from other countries within the topic area of the Action. Young scientists of a participating institute can visit participating public or private institutions abroad in any COST country that has signed the Action.

The duration of a mission must be at least 3 days and no more than 1 month. Successful applicants will receive a grant of up to EURO 1.500. Undergraduates are not eligible. Applications should be sent by 31 March, 2000 to Peter GLÜCK, University of Agricultural Sciences, Vienna, Gregor Mendel-Strasse 33, A – 1180 Wien.

More information and Application Forms can be obtained from MC members or at the COST homepage.

NEXT MEETINGS AND SEMINARS

20-21 March 2000.

Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany. Management Committee and Working Groups.

19-21 October 2000.

Solsona, Spain. Seminar, Management Committee, Working Groups.

The Agenda of the Freiburg meeting will be:

Monday 20 March 2000

Registration

Opening of the MC plenary meeting

COST formalities

Homepage presentation

Approval of the Action Work Plan

WG1 and WG 2 meetings

Tuesday 21 March 2000

WG1 and WG2 meetings

WG Draft Work Plans presentation

Seminar programme 18-19 October 2000

Short-Term Scientific Missions

Other topics

WG Chairs will send separate agendas for WG1 and WG2 meetings.

Working Group meetings and Seminars are open to all interested researchers. For more information, please contact your national Management Committee representative.

CONTACTS

National delegates in the Management Committee are key persons for all inquiries about COST E19. They'll be glad to give further information.

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CHANGE OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Aarne Reunala has been nominated as Director General of forestry at the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in Finland. Therefore he is not able to continue in COST E19 as Vice-chairperson and editor of the Newsletter.

Dr. **Heikki Pajuoja** from Helsinki Research Centre of the Finnish Forest Research Institute will replace him as the Finnish representative in the Management Committee.

The MC meeting in Freiburg 20-21 March 2000 will elect a new Vice-chairperson and editor of the Newsletter.