

## **9. EVALUATION**

### **9.1 Evaluation panel and evaluation procedures**

#### **9.1.1 Evaluation Panel**

The FPP sector Groups Forestry and Pulp and Paper appointed the evaluation panel at its meeting of 18th October 2002 in Helsinki/Finland.

The Evaluation panel included:

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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 panel, a conscious decision was made to select from Sector Group members who had no involvement with COST Action E19. Dr. Rayner is an internationally acknowledged expert in forest policy issues.

#### **9.1.2 Evaluation activities**

The major focus of the final evaluation was the final Workshop held for the Action during 15 - 16 September 2003 in Vienna, Austria. The members of the evaluation panel 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 and achievements of the action with the chairperson(s) of the action and working groups.

Support documentation was obtained from the COST Secretariat in Brussels, the E19 MC secretariat in Vienna and the Action E19 website.

#### **9.1.3 Documents**

All publications and reports listed under 6.1 were used. All reports were received either from the COST Secretariat, the E19 MC Secretariat or from the Action E19 website.

#### **9.1.4 Evaluation procedure**

The activities at the plenary session and 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

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.

A questionnaire was issued to all the participants in the Action during the Workshop to get an overall impression of the performance of the action and, more specific, an assessment of the coherence and quality of the network. 27 out of 42 questionnaires were returned, 22 of them being participants just from the beginning of the action. This information was looked upon as a fairly good representation and solid basis to guess whether the expectations of the participants of the action have been met. All questionnaires were assessed and scored.

To get a more comprehensive insight a guided interview was carried out with 8 active members of the action, including the MC and WP 1 chairs as well as participants of WP 1 and 2 with a geographical and professional (science/administration) distribution. The results provided valuable arguments and background information to the evaluators for better understanding and interpreting the course of the action.

## 9.2 Results versus objectives

According to the Memorandum of Understanding, July 1999, the overall objective is - *'to provide policy makers in Europe with improved means for formulating and implementing national forest programmes'*. A number of other objectives were added to the overall objective. There is evidence that the results of the action have been used directly in the Ministerial Conference on Forest Protection in Europe (MCFPE), in the preparation for the Vienna declaration and in the wording of resolution #1. Some national delegates also indicated that the results of the action had been directly incorporated into their own NFP processes. The overall objective was a very ambitious one, but, in this respect, the action has benefited from good timing as a number of countries began to design and implement their NFPs in the later stages of the action. The successful development of a common understanding of the main components of a NFP has allowed for knowledge developed in one country to be applied in another. However, there was some concern that the results of the action have not been expressed in a form that is easily comprehensible for policy makers. Our assessment confirms the conclusion reached by seminar participants that the action was largely successful in meeting its overall objective.

The other 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;*

Participants described the creation of a network of multidisciplinary researchers and forest policy makers as a significant achievement of the action. There was particular mention of the development of a common language to promote discussion of forest policy issues in a variety of different contexts. There was a successful demonstration of the utility of forest policy science. From a small number of active researchers at the beginning of the action, participation and interest generally increased during the action itself. Geographical coverage, which was never less than 18 countries, was average for an action.

2. *to specify the commonalities and differences of the operational definitions of SFM at the national and sub-national levels in European countries;*

An initial awareness of differences in understanding was created amongst the researchers that needs to be communicated to policy makers. It was felt that the adoption of any particular operational definition of SFM is ultimately a political decision.

*3. to specify the existing understanding and definition of NFPs in European countries;*

Elaborating the existing understanding and definition of NFPs was a central contribution of the action, specifically valuable in the preparation for the MCPFE, so much so that some participants felt that the theory of NFPs was being developed at the expense of providing a practical toolkit for policy makers. However, other participants felt that this preliminary discussion was very necessary in an interdisciplinary action and the practical applications became more prominent as the action proceeded, cutting across national, EU and disciplinary boundaries.

*4. to specify the interpretation of the individual IPF basic elements of NFPs in European countries and to elaborate commonalities and differences;*

An innovative approach was taken in the action, identifying four key elements from the larger International Panel on Forests (IPF) list. These elements – participation, multi-sectoral coordination, conflict resolution and iterative planning - were shown to be capable of different forms of expression in different country and regional contexts, allowing for a significant degree of flexibility in country NFPs and adaptation to local circumstances.

*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;*

The adoption of NFPs relatively late in the action created a lack of data on which to address this objective. However, the wider adoption of NFPs will eventually create the need for evaluation and comparison with other policy tools . The action has successfully formulated a number of hypotheses that will direct research to provide support for such evaluations when they eventually take place, subject to continuous discussion. On a trans-national basis there is now a higher level of confidence that evaluations can be successfully achieved. Research on participation is especially significant given the varied experiences of European countries with participatory approaches to policy making. This is an important area in which the work of the action needs to be continued in programs of further research. The activities of this action are further stimulating existing national initiatives creating productive synergies.

*6. to investigate the chances of implementation of NFPs;*

Few NFP processes had reached the implementation stage during the life of the action but it was felt that the groundwork had been laid to understand the factors responsible for success at the implementation stage. Implementation studies will be another area in which the work of the action needs to be carried on programs of research.

### **9.3 Outcome and achievements**

In addition to the achievements listed in 9.2, there was a widely shared perception that a significant outcome has been the creation of a new interdisciplinary network of European researchers, with links to researchers in other parts of the world. The age profile of this network, specifically its inclusion of younger researchers, is particularly noteworthy. The immediate achievement of this network has been the development of a common understanding of the components of an NFP that has encouraged greater levels of confidence and competency in Europe with respect to the NFP idea. More countries are engaging in NFP processes and there is the beginning of debate and discussion in a number of other countries. This alignment is in part specifically attributable to the activities of network members in their home countries but is also related to the opportunities created by the MCPFE. This mutual interaction needs to be reinforced and sustained. In this respect, the activities of the network members themselves needs to be supplemented by a more general diffusion of the knowledge generated in the action in ways that are accessible to a broader range of policy makers. This issue of knowledge mobilization outside the network is, of course, not restricted to this action but the end of the action raises the issue in an urgent way. The possibility of more carefully targeted dissemination of the action's findings, perhaps electronically or in workshops with policy makers, would increase the take up and mutual benefit of the existing achievements of the action.

Details on dissemination are given under 9.7

### **9.4 Impact of the Action**

The main impact of the action has been to successfully promote an awareness of the relevance of NFPs to European circumstances. At the outset of the action, NFPs were largely associated with tropical conservation issues and it was unclear how the recommendation of the IPF/IFF to consider NFPs in all countries could be applied in Europe. The new awareness of the relevance of NFPs in Europe has, in turn, stimulated further research that should be maintained and supported.

### **9.5 European added-value**

The broader adoption of NFPs in Europe will contribute to the maintenance of public confidence that European forest policy is directed towards the goals of sustainability. In addition to the contribution the action has made to the success of the MCPFE, participants have also noted the potential connections between the work undertaken during the action and the upcoming review of the European Forest Strategy. In many instances, new initiatives and projects have been generated as a consequence of the action both at a national and to a more limited extent, at a European level. At the European level, interdisciplinary research has extended beyond the participation of the academic disciplines to include community partners in the investigation of the role of forests in promoting human health and well-being.

## 9.6 Coordination and management

Assessment:

Evaluation Team: good

Respondents: good

<i>EXCEL</i>	<i>GOOD</i>	<i>F GOOD</i>	<i>POOR</i>	<i>BAD</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>10</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>37%</i>	<i>52%</i>	<i>11%</i>	<i>0%</i>	<i>0%</i>	<i>100%</i>

The feedback from the membership through the questionnaires and the interviews have indicated that the management of the Action was 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.

## 9.7 Dissemination of results

Assessment:

(i) as expressed in the number of joint publications

Evaluation Team: fairly good

<i>&gt;3</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>NONE</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>5</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>19%</i>	<i>11%</i>	<i>15%</i>	<i>30%</i>	<i>26%</i>	<i>100%</i>

Having in mind that a distinct portion of the participants were policy makers or administrative staff in charge of policy matters it could not be expected that the number of joint publications will be as high as compared with actions with “pure” scientist membership.

(ii) as expressed by the standard of information disseminated through this action

Evaluation Team: good

Respondents: excellent/good

<i>EXCEL</i>	<i>GOOD</i>	<i>F GOOD</i>	<i>POOR</i>	<i>BAD</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>9</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>26 (1 non-respondent)</i>
<i>35%</i>	<i>46%</i>	<i>19%</i>	<i>0%</i>	<i>0%</i>	<i>100%</i>

The Action opened a website and used this to post details of this Action, its activities and the relevant documents. Participants generally reported that the website served most if not all of their information needs in a timely fashion.

Meeting records are good and informative. Details on workshops are good and have been disseminated beyond the workshop participants e.g. the MCPFE Vienna conference.

## 9.8 Strengths and weaknesses

In summing up interdisciplinary cooperation and network building has been performed at a good to an outstanding level. Specifically the age structure of the network with a good

mixture of ages is noteworthy. Also the explicit involvement of non-European experts has contributed substantially to the trans-disciplinary exchange of knowledge and understanding. The evaluation team sees it as a strength of the action that the tension between theoretical model building and empirical research has been heard and turned into productive discussion. The attraction of numerous non-EU countries to join the action has also been interpreted as a success in itself.

Most complaints concerned discontinuous and uncertain funding affecting meeting schedules and STSM program as well as increasing dissemination of results through reports.

The evaluation team concluded that there was good utilization of political science concepts but fewer theoretical contributions that refine and develop the concepts. It proved beyond the capacity of this action to bridge the gap between the development of new knowledge and the dissemination of it to policy makers in the form of useful knowledge or a policy toolkit.

## **9.9 Recommendations**

1. It is increasingly acknowledged that the responsibility of the researcher does not stop with the publication of the results but must be both framed as a useful product and linked to the target community. In preparing the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Program it is strongly recommended that this connection should specifically addressed to and budgetary provision should be made accordingly.– So the program design should provide instruments that encourage the researchers to take the product to the target audience rather than wait for the target audience to find the product.

2. The distinct momentum that the action has generated warrants support in the COST framework to continue the fruitful connection between the action and the MCPFE. This holds particularly in the evaluation of NFPs as they are adopted by more countries and in assessing the impact of NFP adoption versus the experiences of those countries that have chosen other means to SFM. This follow-up action could quite effectively take up new developments that have occurred in the intervening period with the aim of making further theoretical contributions to forest policy science.

3. In the light of the interruption of funding the action had to face with negative effects on the motivation of participants as well as on the fulfillment of the work program it is extremely important that in multi –year actions every effort must be made to ensure continuity of funding.

4. Future funding should recognize the effective contribution of interdisciplinary forest policy science as a conceptual framework for socio-economic analysis.